RAMPARTS

JANUARY·1963

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RAMPARTS

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC JOURNAL

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A SYMPOSIUM ON JESUIT UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

IN MARCH: **THE LAYMAN'S VIEW**
IN MAY: **THE JESUIT VIEW**

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GEZA ST. GALY,
the noted artist whose work appears in churches as well as in galleries, will be featured in the March 1963 issue of RAMPARTS. The presentation will consist of an *Artist's Notebook* and a selection of many of Mr. St. Galy's finest works.

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John Howard

GRIFFIN

Interview
Worksheet
Scattered Shadows

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Interview

with Thomas P. McDonnell

"I WAS BORN June 16, 1920, Dallas, Texas; attended grade school in Fort Worth public schools; high school (Lycée Descartes, Tours) and college (École de Médécine, Tours; Institute de Touraine, Univ. de Poitiers) in France, studying medicine, specializing in psychiatry—assistant to Dr. Pierre Fromenty at the Asylum of Tours as research assistant in use of various therapies, particularly sound therapy. At beginning of World War II (1939), when doctors were taken into French army, was left in charge of women's sector of the Asylum, 120 patients, with 8 nuns to help care for them—no other help. Remained there, also doing resistance work, smuggling qualified German and Austrian Jewish refugees from Tours to port of St. Nazaire. Finally obliged to leave when France's fall was near. Returned to U.S. Air Force service in South Pacific 39 months; continued studies on my own; broadcast radio concerts of recorded music (classical) to front area troops; taught composition to combat fatigue cases, etc. Worked with Pacific dialects and did studies of various cultures. Twice wounded, lost most of sight as result of brain damage; returned to France at the end of the war, almost blind, to continue studies. Abandoned medicine, due to approaching blindness, and took intensive work in musicology, specializing in medieval music, particularly Gregorian Chant. Pupil of Nadia Boulanger, Robert Casadesus, Jean Batalla. Did research work for a lengthy period with special permission at the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes where loss of sight became total. Made studies of the monastic systems and history, mystical psychology. Spring of 1947, completely blind, returned to America to attend schools for the blind. Extensive musicological lectures; intensive work in experimental livestock breeding to determine what could be done in this field by the blind. Concentrated courses in animal husbandry, psychology of adjustment, etc. Began writing *The Devil Rides Outside*, 1949 and abandoned everything else in favor of writing. Converted to Catholicism in 1952—or rather made the act, though the conversion was crystallized long before and the writing of *The Devil Rides Outside* finally convinced me that I had no alternative. Began studies, via private lessons and taped classes, of philosophy with the Discalced Carmelite Fathers and others and proceeded formally into studies of Thomistic philosophy and Theology. Married, three children. In 1957, eleven years after loss of sight, after lengthy medical treatment, sight was partially restored. Wrote six books during the period of blindness, plus innumerable articles and studies. Published only two of the six books, the others still being rewritten. Since sight recovery, published *Land of the High Sky* (history of the Staked Plain area of West Texas); *Black Like Me*. Preparing to publish *Scattered Shadows* (autobiography of the years of blindness and sight recovery); *Street of the Seven Angels* (novel); *Passacaglia* (novel)."

—JOHN HOWARD GRIFFIN

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INTERVIEWER

I SUPPOSE, since *The Devil Rides Outside* was pretty much a beginning for you, that it might be well to begin with something about that book. First, it was published by Smiths, in Fort Worth, Texas—an initial venture, I believe, for both the publisher and the author. Is there any possibility that *The Devil Rides Outside* might subsequently be re-issued and distributed by your present publisher, Houghton Mifflin?

GRIFFIN

Probably so, eventually. There has been some talk of this, but no definite plans. The book is not available in America, except in the Pocket Book version. However, it still sells steadily in Europe and Great Britain.

INTERVIEWER

The foregoing question, of course, is not in any way intended as an inquiry into the private relationship between publisher and writer. Rather, it is to suggest the illuminating possibility of what a re-issue might reveal of a change in critical view and atmosphere, especially in the Catholic press, where the response was not only critically deficient, to say the least, but emotionally sophomoric. To put the question directly, then, what place do you yourself now give to *The Devil Rides Outside*, in the corpus, so to speak, of your work?

GRIFFIN

I have no idea what a re-issue might reveal in critical lines, especially the Catholic press, which was always much divided on this book. You ask what place I now give *The Devil Rides Outside* in the corpus of my work? I must admit I have never even thought about such things. I have never read the work through, and although I feel that it was a beginning for me, a novel that set up many problems of technique and content that I am still very much preoccupied with, I have never attempted to evaluate it. I have a strong tendency, the moment a work is finished (I mean in final draft, which for me is often ten or fifteen drafts), not only to detach myself thoroughly from it, but to feel very uncomfortable talking about it. The creation of works is, for me, an intense matter—a matter of almost hallucinatory concentration; and when the work is done, it is done for me too, and I never go back to it.

INTERVIEWER

Maxwell Geismar was one of the few critics of reputation to give your first novel anything like the serious reading it still deserves. He called attention—if in fact such attention had to be called at all—to the wealth of authentic character creation in *Devil*. One means, of course, Salesky, Madame Vincent, Madame Renee, Dr. Castelar, and the others. This characterization, along with the authentic identity of milieu and place in the novel, is a quality that is not very strong in the practice of the contemporary American novel. The question naturally follows, and I admit it is largely a meaningless one as far as the novelist is concerned, were the characterizations in *Devil* drawn more from life than from the imagination?

GRIFFIN

Given the ordinary translation of characteristics from people one has known, the characters in *The Devil* were created, some of them from a void, to fulfill a definite function. Dr. Castelar is wholly "imagined," Madame Renee was created as the embodiment of pride. The "four women" were created as the embodiments of four sensual types as the protagonist reacted to them (this number chosen merely for balance). The recreation of the Benedictine life was based on a long meditation on the primitive rule of St. Benedict —in other words, an attempt to create a Benedictine community in its ideal state rather than any attempt to express the human shortcomings that make this ideal appear ideal (as Father Gerald Vann, O. P., pointed out, all in understanding why I tried to portray "what might be, what should be"). Father Clement, for example, is the creation of the order priest in contrast to Father Sauvac, etc. Mother Nourrie was wholly created also as a sort of bridge character between the heaven and the earth motives, a character to nullify guilt. Madame Vincent wholly created, again, for deliberate contrast.

INTERVIEWER

Maxwell Geismar has further suggested that you deal with the bold theme "in broad and heavy colors. . . ." One wishes that he had carried the image further to say that in *Devil* your style is pure Rouault. In another instance, however, there

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is a remark of Geismar's which seems to me to call for some comment. He asks: ". . . what else is Griffin's Benedictine Brotherhood but a highly refined, intellectually and spiritually sublimated form of the military son-horde in which James Jones's restless anarchs also found their true home and refuge?" This is an important question to ask, since it goes to establish the relationship of the hero with both the secular and spiritual communities. But Geismar's is one of those calculatedly phrased questions which affirms its own answer and leaves it at that. Was this in fact your own notion of monastic spirituality?

GRIFFIN

Thank you for what you say about the Rouault similarity! Rouault has visually been a tremendous influence in my concepts and in my work. About Maxwell Geismar's comment, comparing the Benedictine brotherhood with the military son-horde, etc.: I recall at one time or another discussing this point in great length by correspondence with Max. At first it jolted me, but if one goes into it deeply enough, there is some validity in the remark, and this is no derogation of the Benedictine or any other monastic brotherhood . . . but the connection is very deep indeed and must be qualified, for the connection ceases entirely at a certain point—true home, yes; refuge, never. The monastic brotherhood is aimed at individual union with God, heroic virtue; whereas the military son-horde perhaps at heroism, but of a vastly different sort from what we mean by heroic virtue; but still similarity in glorification of some blinding thing beyond self, in the way of self-fulfillment (son-horde) as contrasted to the way of self-loss (in the sense of ecstatic union) of the mystical life. I don't know if this is coherent, but there are many parallels and at the same time many contradistinctions here. Max knew them when he made this statement, and I think I know them after thinking over the statement; and I value the statement largely because it has forced me to clarify it in my mind. Was this my own notion of monastic spirituality? Oddly enough, at the beginning it was; but living the monastic life in the creative imagination quickly changed my notion of monastic spirituality and humbled me with a sort of grief at the facility of my former hypothesis. Nevertheless, there is still an element of truth in what Geismar says, more so, I am sure, than we like to admit—but which we should admit. It is an intriguing notion—one finds this more in the novitiate than in the community, however, and it is quickly passed in the religious life, must be before the initial progress can begin. What I am trying to say here is that Geismar's statement does not offend me; it has profound elements of truth.

INTERVIEWER

Nuni was not the disastrous second novel of the successful first-novelist. It managed, on the contrary, to reveal a capacity for range and interpretation that is not commonly found in the self-limitations of even our most noted contemporary American novelists. A passion for neat categories might assume that *Nuni* psychologically preceded *The Devil Rides Outside*. That is to say, its darkness and mythical origins would seem the Inferno to *Devil's* Purgatorio and Paradiso—no matter how strange the conjunction of all these references may sound. What is your comment on this?

GRIFFIN

Nuni, in my creative framework, had no connection (conscious) with *The Devil*. Superficially, it began as the challenge of a "single character" drama. Since my essential knowledge of all art is essentially musical, and my work merely the translation of musical forms, I wanted to attempt a dissonant, contrapuntal work with but a single voice line (in contrast to the many voice lines of *The Devil*). I worked for a long time in this sense, wanting no flashback, no other accepted techniques of "filling in"; but I did this at the outset, confident that the character would eventually possess me and something would develop. I spent three years of intense labor working on nothing else but this book, which became a personal translation of a great struggle that I was seeking to handle in my own life.

During this period I was blind, and before the book was well under way, I became paralyzed from a spinal virus, to a point where I had for a time only the use of one arm. During the long period of therapies and surgical interventions, I was in constant and usually agonizing pain. It seemed to me that I was being stripped of everything that we usually consider absolutely neces-

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sary to living as a man. I was married, had a child, and my condition therefore had resonances in the lives of others. And yet, during these dark years when I lost all human contacts except with my family, a few people—very few—were aware of it and kept close to me, giving me the courage to work. Among these, in fact almost the only ones, were Maxwell Geismar and Father J. Stanley Murphy, C. S. B., both of whom remained in intimate and faithful contact with me. In addition, the Discalced Carmelite Fathers arranged for me to use this period of immobility and pain (physical pain) to continue my formal studies of philosophy and theology. Father Stan Murphy also helped in this, by sending me an unceasing flow of tapes from people like Maritain, Gilson—the finest thinkers of our time. This, with the intense training given me by the Carmelite Fathers, turned an almost unbearable period into the happiest one of our lives for me and my family. The great jubilus of Aquinas fully entered my life, whereas he had been nothing more than a passion previously. Jacques Maritain, with immeasurable charity, became my friend, and in a sense (through his works and corespondence), my mentor—at least he opened many, many doors.

All of this was *Nuni* for me. It was the translation to a Pacific Island and culture, with a completely fictional character, the problems and solutions that were part of my own life—but a translation, nevertheless, with parallels all along the line. In addition, *Nuni* was written quite a long while after my loss of sight, at a time when my visual memory had atrophied terribly, when I no longer made visual images of anything. Therefore, I felt the deliberate need to create a visual book, a book that would, through the creative process rather than memory, not be handicapped by my own lack of sight. This book, which was so disliked in general, I have never read; but unlike any other work I have written, it remains quite special in my life; too personal for me to have any competent judgment of it, or its function or place in the corpus of work.

INTERVIEWER

Of course *The Devil Rides Outside* is not without its mythical implications. The girl left in Paris, the peasant girl Christianne, Madame Vincent, Madame Renee, Mother Nourrie, all comprise the several manifestations of Robert Graves' White Goddess—from Muse to Bitch to Hag to Comforter. This may appear one of those critical excesses which the artist may disclaim as more or less irrelevant. But I wonder, in a seemingly contradictory question, how much you may be aware of the unconscious at work in your own creation? In *Nuni* there seems considerable evidence that it was very much at work.

GRIFFIN

I think I am aware that the unconscious is the major factor in my work. To write two hundred pages I throw away ten thousand—this is no exaggeration, but a fact. The two hundred that I finally save out of the mass are those where the unconscious, or poetic intuition, or creative intuition, have taken precedence. My first drafts are unreadable except by me—a great flow of illiterate and often irrelevant (seemingly) statements written as they came, after careful preparation and much thought. Then the major labor comes with the creation of a work out of these elements, arranging, adapting, enlarging or suppressing. I have a great love of form and of technique, which comes from my training in music, but the raw material comes initially from the flow that is largely an ability (usually under the stimulus of music) to allow the unconscious to speak.

INTERVIEWER

Again, in *Nuni*, Maxwell Geismar sees the "theme of the isolated stranger, and the hostile universe becomes dominant—a black, savage, and threatening world. . . . From another angle, the nightmare visions of *Nuni* also project backward into the primitive childhood of the race. (Are children, after all, so pure, innocent, and blameless?) And with this horrid dream of a 'black birth' Griffin has allied himself, even more than in the earlier conflict of good and evil, with the 'dark writers' of literature." Well, as you can see, there are a lot of questions packed in Geismar's remarks. I should prefer, if I may, to let them arise out of some comments I feel compelled to make. First, it would seem to me to make much more sense to reverse the dramatic situation that Geismar has identified—that is to say, isn't *Nuni* as much the experience of, if not truly the intent to

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dramatize, the isolated black in a white society as it is the other way around?

GRIFFIN

I accept, with interest, your remarks and Max's about *Nuni;* but I think all I can say is that there was no conscious attempt to do anything more than what I have stated above. I had no conscious desire whatsoever to show anything about Negro or white, though I suppose I should much like to say that it was the attempt to dramatize the isolated black in a white society. But this would be untrue, much as I wish it were so. It is the mystical life dramatized in all of its parallels with some interconnection with what psychologists call "adjustment"—the Thomistic concept of charity (in the sense of *caritas*), the mystical reconciliation of the passions and the function of the will, etc. My whole and limited idea here was the salvation of the individual, and I did not intentionally, alas, have any concern at all with groups or intercultural problems. The major thesis, if there is one beyond the mystical, is the thin veneer that civilization puts on us, the fragility of our "civilized" and domesticated natures, our closeness to the aboriginal state.

INTERVIEWER

I don't want to keep harping on Geismar's observations in order to set off the notes of my own, but when he asks: "Are children, after all, so pure, innocent, and blameless?", I wonder that he did not relate this to William Golding's *Lord of the Flies.* It seems to me that a rather fruitful comparison might be made of *Nuni* with Golding's modern classic, for that's what it is. And still to the point, perhaps, do you think there is any further relevance in the notion that the conscience of *Black Like Me* was already implicit in *Nuni?*

GRIFFIN

I do not know Golding's work, so I cannot competently answer your suggestion about this comparison. I think the basic interest here is this: Max Geismar has a genius for stimulating writers, probably much more than other critics, I don't know. He is—how can we say it without sounding stupid or without placing limitations on him—perhaps he is "psychologically oriented." He is a psychologist and more. But I am essentially a Thomist, and in *Nuni*, I think wholly so. A Freudian (and Geismar is this, but something more) looks upon innocence in a far different

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manner from a theologian. He asks if children are, after all, so pure, innocent, and blameless? I say without hesitation that they are until they reach an age of decision, judgment; and that the enormities that children commit—the sexual ones, that is—do not meet the requirements of sin, as is obvious. I also think that (as I stated in *Nuni* somewhere) we have an all too human concept of sin, and are in this more God-than-God. (A theme I develop at great length in a current work). I mentioned the protagonist's contempt for those missionaries who go in and blandly destroy cultures of great worth by teaching innocents the catalogue of sins, usually destroying and distorting the naturally functioning human into an obscenity. We are fully and deeply into this error on an almost universal scale wherever quote-Christianity-unquote is being spread today.

I am deeply convinced now, through a new light that has come to me from Geismar's recent investigation of Melville's *Billy Budd* and *Typee* (in his Introduction), of something that has long harrassed me—that routine Christian morality is the greatest possible handicap to sanctity, and that the struggles toward the higher spheres of sanctity are largely those struggles back to "naturally functioning humanity" that have been destroyed by superficial moral and religious ethics. That the interior workings of the saint would scandalize (as I have often said) the routine practitioner of religion, and indeed most of mankind. (This is the explanation, in part, of a question you ask further about the earthiness of my work—it is this point, this need to destroy insidious angelism that is so prevalent and such a delusion and such an anti-God thing.) In the context of this thinking, then, I believe in the innocence of the innocent.

Whether or not the conscience of *Black Like Me* was implicit in *Nuni*, I do not know; but I think that the conclusion of *Nuni* had a profound effect in the formation of this conscience, that I learned from this book, as I learn from all my books.

INTERVIEWER

Specifically, then, concerning *Black Like Me*, can you say something about the personal response you've had from readers of that book? As you know, I sent Thomas Merton a copy and he read it with great interest and, needless to say, the deepest sympathy. Consequently, that is the level of response I would be more interested in hearing about. The hostile reaction is, of course, predictable without variation; and it is altogether boring and dehumanizing to read. Can you say whether *Black Like Me* will appear in paperback? I ask these questions, because the more than casual reader cannot but speculate on the unwritten sequel behind such a book. Therefore, a reprint edition would give you the chance to add an afterword—perhaps, in part, the article that appeared in *Sepia* on the looting of the original manuscript and what has happened since then.

GRIFFIN

The response to *Black Like Me* has been altogether astonishing to me. I have never received so much mail on a book. Out of some six thousand letters from Southern whites alone, only nine have been abusive; most have said they *wished* they could do something, but feared reprisals, etc. More astonishing have been letters from many of the world's great and famous thinkers, altogether unsolicited; letters from professionals, many from teachers, etc. I knew that the work posed a serious problem for ethicists, but I felt the problem was infinitely less important than the problem I wanted to discover: what it is like to be a Negro under discrimination, what it does to the soul of a man (and this harkened back almost traumatically to *Nuni*). But overwhelming letters have come from Maritain, Justice Bok, Gerald Vann, and many priests and nuns. These people had no qualms whatsoever and no squeamishness such as that shown by some of the Catholic reviewers and also, quite often, by seminarians of various beliefs. The book was a nightmare to me, done without Maritain's knowledge but at his inspiration and at Aquinas's (after reading St. Thomas on justice and Maritain on racism), and indeed my wife and I both knew and expected what came by way of reprisals and grief—a terrible sadness—from Maritain's statement that all that can save us is a return of authentic charity and metaphysics, and that some must be prepared to be martyrs for the love of humanity. We believed this and were thus prepared somewhat.

Yes, there is a paperback version due out soon,

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but this will not carry an epilogue. However, the movie, which will be extremely faithful to the book, will handle this aftermath and also the more personal elements—the intimate effects on my family and me, etc., since they are basing the script not only on the book but also on my journals, which are quite full.

INTERVIEWER

Of course *Black Like Me* must have been an intense experience for you—the third of an all but traumatic nature. Few writers of our time can call upon such experiences—one thinks of the traumatic death-wounds (in World War I) of Hemingway and the similar experiences of Robert Graves and David Jones. This, to me at least, makes the so-called Beats look pretty pale and artificial. (The fact is, however, if we are to assume the ambivalence of Academy/anti-Academy, that I am strongly simpatico with the Beats.) Although it is by now all but passé, and hardly existed as an authentic literary movement in the first place, what relevance can you see in such writing to your own? Kerouac, for example.

GRIFFIN

Unfortunately, and perhaps purposely, I read practically nothing in the realm of criticism or literature—at least contemporary literature. I therefore have never read Kerouac or any of the Beats, not out of contempt, but because it seems to me that I have no longer any time for that. No, this is not entirely it, but the creation of works is such a complicated matter with me, a matter of constantly growing set of organisms that overlap (for I work on a number of things at the same time), and my works seem inevitable to me; and I fear any intrusion that might upset the balance, that might turn me aside with delight or contempt or arrogance. I gamble that the massive amount that I turn out is worth turning out—nothing more. But that amount requires such tremendous labor, such time, such reworking, that other works are an intrusion that I do not permit myself. Also, I love the works of others (though I know few of them, practically none of any of our leading contemporaries) and once I open myself to them, I read them obsessively and am seduced toward them, and therefore I avoid them. I have a huge work (though I have no assurance of its quality or worth) conceptualized and in the mill, so to speak, a series of novels; and these absorb all of my time, all of my energies—even a momentary interruption throws me off, takes me hours to get back into what I am doing. And so I cannot, much as I should like to, have any recourse to the pleasures or instruction offered by my contemporaries.

INTERVIEWER

In more general terms, then, what is your view of the position the novel now holds in modern writing? It is pronounced defunct with great regularity in both the Sunday supplements and the quarterlies. Serious critics like Yvor Winters gave it the full count years ago, and young practitioners like Gore Vidal still have disturbing doubts about the capacity of the novel as a literary form today. What is obvious, however, as well as obviously overlooked, is that the novel is neither dead nor dying, but changing. The *aliterature* "movement" in France (Nathalie Sarraute, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Claude Mauriac) seems to me as authentic in respect to legitimate experiment as the Beat movement was merely false or phony. I see elements of both the traditional and the new literature in your own work, but at this point I don't want to go any further than to say so. Therefore, however tenuously, has the new writing in France had any influence on you, apart from what critics may or may not observe in what you have already written; and, as a professional novelist of rank, what meaning for the novel do you see in the present French influences? Do you in fact, as a writer, care to name any sources of influence?

GRIFFIN

I am incompetent in most of this question. I have been told that much of my experimentation with the novel (whatever that means) resembles work being done by people like Robbe-Grillet, but I have not the vaguest idea what he is doing, so can't say. The thing that dumbfounds me, of course, is the cliché that the novel is dead, exhausted, etc. I feel, like you, that it is changing (was it ever static?) and in my own concept, which is almost exclusively the concept of a novelist for want of something better to call it, the novel represents a form, the potentialities of which are endlessly variable; and that the novel demands now a fulfillment, a greater depth of ex-

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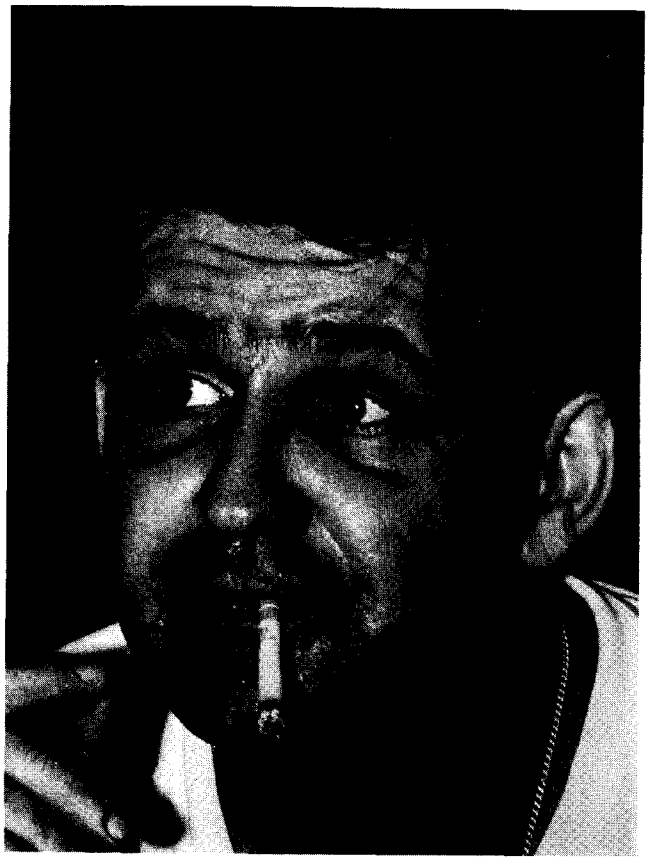
ploration. I feel that there are entire realms of the inexpressible that we must put in this form, and that from this point of view, a vast field of exploration is still before us. This is not a cherished statement—it is something I feel quite desperately, profoundly—my frustration is with anyone who could be so blind as not to see the obvious materials yet to be explored, from which, in the novel, new variants (legitimate, not tricked up) must flower.

Yes, I can name sources that have formed my taste (is this not the right word?). None of the new writing—again, alas, because I do not know it at all. My contact with other arts is constant, though, and forms a continuing nourishment. The great influences on me have been painting and music and philosophy (but in the Thomistic sense). Rouault, Braque, Modigliani mostly in painting; also Robert Ellis, whom I consider a great genius now coming into full maturity. In music, I have learned much from Stravinsky among the moderns, but vastly more from Bach and Mozart and, most of all, from Gregorian Chant. However, Mozart and the Beethoven of the last quartets and sonatas have dictated most of my work.

In literature, I suppose I have been most influenced by Molière (though I do not think this is perceptible yet, but comes into force in *Street of the Seven Angels*); but most of all, in such diverse but profound influences as the poet Reverdy, more recently Raïssa Maritain; but largely the Fathers, St. John of the Cross and, again, most particularly the liturgy and St. Thomas Aquinas (*stylistically* as well as from the viewpoint of content). Again, Camus, who was a thunderbolt to me; and some of the short stories of Sartre; one short story of Malraux; of the writers in English, probably Whitman and Melville have affected me the most. I write a great deal in French, do much of my first drafts in French and then translate, or recreate in English. I think these things shaped my tastes. Personal contact with Reverdy, the bath of my formative years in French *lycée* and college and medical schools and monasteries; the work of Maritain, all of these are dominant. From Maritain, Reverdy, the monastic life, I learned the value of total isolation in work, of following one's



own paths, remaining close to the soul's recognition of reality, taking the chance. . . . All of my mentors—Reverdy, Maritain, Casadesus (in music), etc.—have drummed this into me from my adolescence: "Go it alone . . . it is the only hope. In the crowd there is nothing but comfort and mediocrity," and this became part of my nature. I have done this for many years now, and things come that would not otherwise come, and I do not waste time wondering and worrying whether they are good or bad according to prevailing standards; but focus everything on the good of the work and let fall what will. I think these influences, which are very great, combined with a constant examination of mystical psychology, and my great love of music and painting, trigger off the creative process; the tentative is either rejected or takes hold, and when it takes hold it grows until I recognize in it some life of its own, and then I attempt to make everything subservient to that life until it grows as whole as I can make it. I am quite certain that I have little or no talent of myself . . . and this is not false modesty; I have simply

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learned by experience to recognize life when it enters a work, and to nurture it as far as I can take it; and always I mourn that I am such a poor one, so limited in my care and skill in bringing a work to its own life.

INTERVIEWER

I understand that you have already completed another novel, except for the job of final rewriting, which you call *Passacaglia*. This is a work about a concert pianist and about painting. Well, somewhat relevant to the preceding question, Nathalie Sarraute has said in "The Age of Suspicion" that "since impressionism, all pictures have been painted in the first person. . . ." It will be interesting to trace the relationship of this double-effect in modern art with your latest work in fiction. Of what period is the painting in *Passacaglia?* I would assume, of course, that the music is of the same period.

GRIFFIN

Passacaglia is difficult to describe. It is contemporary; the paintings are two Modigliani women, but even this begins to falsify what the book is. The Modiglianis change as the pianist himself changes, though they remain the same canvasses. The crux of the book is something about the effect not only of the artist on the paintings and the paintings on the artist, but the effects upon his life of constant contact with the stratospheres of music; the tendency of great art to open up reality (instead of closing it, as so many believe) . . . and therefore the life of a man who is constantly formed by these stratospheres—the "useless things" as Father Vann calls them—and who achieves a sort of "normalcy" in the Thomistic sense. But it is a quite vast book, and I think I give you probably a wrong slant of it.

INTERVIEWER

It is all too usual in interviews with writers, for what good I don't know, to ask them whether they write in the morning or in the afternoon, whether sitting down or standing on their heads, with a ball-point pen or a Smith-Corona, ad nauseum. I hope it is not too close to such idiocies to ask something about your origins as a writer. As nearly as such points can be identified, when did you start writing? If you can state them, what were your chief compulsions?

GRIFFIN

My beginnings, or how I began, embarrass me in a way. I had, as a schoolboy and later as a young man in France, a great love of literature; but my vocation, I felt, was science, medicine. When I returned to France after the War, almost blind, I had to abandon the cherished hope of completing my medical studies, and so entered musicology, a scientific hobby up to that point, with great intensity. I collaborated on some musical works, scholarly works, in French; then with the loss of sight, returned to the U. S. to attend schools for the blind. I went into experimental breeding of purebred livestock and devoted some years to that, all the while giving lectures on musicology, Gregorian Chant, the liturgy, etc., but infinitely more interested and fascinated by animal husbandry and and how it related to the problems of sight and sightlessness.

One day, when he was in the area giving a lecture, John Mason Brown came to see me. We spent the afternoon talking and when he left, he told me I must write. He said I talked like a writer, and in this way I could use some of my background. That astonished me, and I reacted as though it were absurd to think of such a thing; told him that one did not just sit down and write, etc. He said one sure as hell did, for me to get a lot of paper and start. That was on a Thursday. I called the Lighthouse for the Blind and asked if anyone there could teach me to type. They taught me on Friday. I worried about Mr. Brown's "command," and since I had been trained in *Lycée* and monastery in obedience, I abandoned my reservations and "obeyed." I practiced typing all that week-end; and on Monday I began *The Devil Rides Outside*, applying musical techniques and forms and writing it mostly in French. That was in 1949, and I never stopped since, and have worked without a vacation in the thirteen years to this day—seven days a week, year in and year out.

My writing is accompanied by a tremendous program of study, but always in fields that are not directly related, usually in the realms of religious psychology, theology, history, problems of leisure and automation, etc. The irony of this beginning is that Brown, I understand, has been con-

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sistently offended and horrified by my work, which is understandable; but this is all second-hand, and he would probably be too gracious to admit it. In any event, I have never heard from him again, from that day to this. *The Devil*, as you know, offended many people—and many who were most outraged at its crudities, etc., were among his circle of friends; but this is off the record. Someone with one of the New York newspapers said he asked Brown about this, and Brown said he would not like to take credit, that all he did was make the suggestion, etc.

My chief, and indeed only, compulsion (since I have a real aversion to publishing my work) is the vast preoccupation of the work itself—and in this there are so many resonances that it is not easy to be precise. I am endlessly amazed and dumbfounded by experience itself, by humanity as part of experience, by the strange, intimate slavery involved in communicating experience, or amazement or wonder, from the welter of reality into the realm of an organism which is a novel or short story. I never write for myself or for an audience (except non-fiction); but only for the good of the object, the work; and this is why my work often offends my own taste. But putting it down, letting it live, grow, become self-sustaining, with my doing only the "labor"—the mopping and sweeping and selecting and feeding—this is what fascinates all of my attention. Once it is done, on its own, I become a stranger to it completely, and could not care less whether or not it is a success or failure, what its reviews or sales are; and in fact attempt to avoid finding out. This is why, since I work constantly on new things, I am not very good at discussing or remembering the old ones, since I forget what I wrote and have never even kept copies of my books, at least not until recently, when it was pointed out to me that my children might one day like to have copies.

INTERVIEWER

Finally, a question that cannot but smack of eastern seaboard snobbery. You have a range and depth of writing, earthy and culturally informed at the same time, which one does not commonly associate with Texas and the tradition of the Great Wild West. Maxwell Geismar's essay on you is in fact called "The Devil in Texas," but surely there is more of Europe in your writing than there is of Texas. This is a quality, I think, which you have in common with Katherine Anne Porter. That is to say, you both have the capacity, which few American writers have had, to encounter the European experience and to respond to it with force and genuine art. The point is that you live in a place which we take to be regional with a vengeance, and yet your writing sports neither Hollywood oil-wells nor J. Frank Dobie longhorns. This of course will appear anomalous only to Babbitts and boosters. Still, as a writer, is there something you can say to "explain" this?

GRIFFIN

I would not know any definite answer. I live in total isolation, so it doesn't matter really where I live. I have an extreme passion for the process of living, a great love not of life but of humanity in all the aspects of its living; fascination with the constant paradox, the contraries, sanctity in whatever realm, evil in whatever realm, and this constant interplay—all of that anchored in theology; but with the certainty that the virtue of art is the *major focus* and the *best good in the long run* for someone like me, someone with my vocation; and that the disciplines of art must take precedence over the thesis, even while being permeated with it. The compulsion with me is the work, the exploration and the endless attempt to subserve the "thing to be created." Since this encompasses all of life, it is an endless mystery and fascination . . . indeed a compulsion; but it is also why I never attempt to write in any given style or on any consistent theme, and never attempt to deny the contradictions.

I give little or no thought to the "whys," am immensely ill-informed in my field. I was horrified not long ago to read in a textbook called *Communicative Reading* (Macmillan), in which they used one of my short stories, the series of questions at the end of the story, and to note that I could not answer a single one of them about my own work.

About the European experience, I am not at all clear. For me, the European experience meant one thing primarily—I had close contact with the great poets and artists and saints, some as friends, others through living in an atmosphere steeped with

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them. Most of these people taught me, or showed me by example, the real meaning of labor, of the total gift of self, as the only possible way to fruition in any field; and as a necessary adjunct, the complete unconcern for all the fringe elements and activities; the sacrifice, if one can use such a term, of everything else, everything extraneous. I do not think this is a common attitude in our society, though I think there is a great hunger for it under the surface. We have given the impression to writers, for example, that "gifted" people write a couple of hours a day and then *live;* and we have used terms like "the full life," adventure, etc., without ever (why? I wonder) giving them any idea of the tremendous labor and devotion necessary to do more than get beneath the surface of formula. In Europe we were taught this, and that anything less was despicable. Our lives were made very hard (but how magical it all seems now) and we were never "encouraged" by the masters, but shown the valor, courtesy, and tenderness involved in high accomplishment. These are the things I think I got . . . the rest is all research, living, I mean, suffering or joy—all of it. Not that this is the first value; I value the divine and the human above dedication to work, and feel that unless such values took precedence, the work of a novelist would be sterile, self-defeating.

About Maxwell Geismar—someday you should do a study of the "unofficial" value of such a man . . . I mean the way he does writers. I think it is okay that we have become such devoted friends that all of the author-critic reticences have vanished and there is no longer any such relationship, and probably no objectivity either. Yet the man has a genius for bringing a writer out. Over ten years of constant contact, I have long since realized his capacity for asking the stimulating question, throwing the right challenge at a writer, and opening up areas of speculation and creative endeavor that are truly remarkable. Could there be more different types than he and Maritain, or he and Aquinas? And yet their role in my creative and affective life has been the same. My correspondence with him, because I can write him with no reserve, no caution, certainly has, over the years, opened up many areas that are used in my work, and in the future, I have little doubt that this will be more evident.

The other major source of stimulation and learning is my wife and children—just the fact that I am blessed with an overwhelming love for them, and the incomparable learning that comes from the fact of loving. I find it wholly extraordinary that they adjust their lives to mine with all the good will and grace and joy in the world, and create an atmosphere of sustained happiness that allows for uninterrupted work; even though they never ask me about the work, never read a line I've written (out of discretion) until it is published.

THOMAS P. MCDONNELL, *journalist and editor, has published articles and reviews in many journals. He edited the recent* Thomas Merton Reader *(Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.)*

A GRIFFIN WORKSHEET FROM *THIRTEEN FOR CHRIST.*

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that appeared hopelessly idealistic under the circumstances. They must do battle, yes, ~~to the death~~ and die if necessary, to gain for themselves and their children rights of which they were being daily defrauded under the "System." This System ~~was~~ — a complex of Jim Crow laws, long-enforced customs and traditions, ~~the System~~ says in effect that a Negro should pay taxes and defend his country from its enemies, but than he should not vote, have educational equality, equal protection under the law, equal employment opportunities, equal housing; and that he should not have access to public eating places, hotels, concert halls, libraries or most hospitals. The System, as every Negro knew, contrived in countless subtle ways to destroy the Negro's freedoms, to exclude him from his constitutional rights, to kill his incentive to struggle for a better life, to reduce him, in effect, to the terrible tiredness that sleep could never assuage. In Montgomery, the Negro community had reached ~~this point~~. "Actually," Dr. King explained, "no one can understand the action of Mrs. Parks unless he realizes that eventually the cup of endurance runs over and the human personality cries out 'I can take it no longer.'" Martin Luther King's first problem, then, was to inspire his people not only to persevere but to limit themselves to one weapon - the weapon of Love; to return love for hate; to ~~believe in~~ accept a truth ~~that sounds~~ strange to modern ears but which the Negro's life had uniquely prepared him to ~~believe~~ understand - that unearned suffering is redemptive. He asked his people to do that rare thing, to make themselves subservient to an ideal (the Christ-Ideal) in the face of opponents who made ideals subservient to their prejudices.

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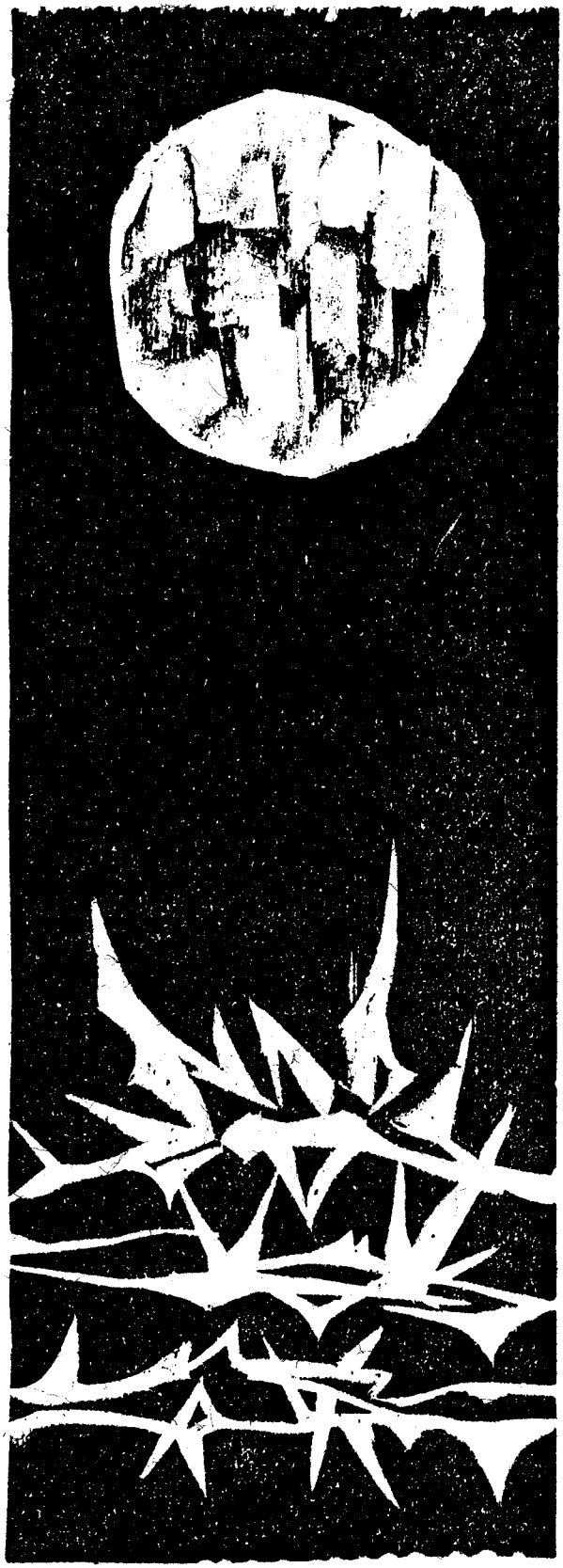

scattered shadows

This selection is from Griffin's autobiography, entitled Scattered Shadows, *which will be issued by Houghton Mifflin later this year.*

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I

IN THE SUMMER OF 1946 I returned to France to spend the remaining months of my sighted life. There, in the magnificent surroundings of the Palace of Fontainebleau, nourished by music, the act of seeing became its own drama—private, intimate and personal. And it became very nearly sublime.

I told no one. I felt that losing my sight was a thing I had to do alone. I led two lives—one as a conservatory student; the other as a man looking avidly on things with the peculiar light of knowing he sees them for the last time.

My attempts to hide my condition were not always successful. Toward the end of summer, the celebrated baritone, Pierre Bernac, came to Fontainebleau to give a recital with Gaby Casadesus. The Casadesus family were old and dear friends of mine. Gaby, Bernac and I were alone in the empty concert room of the palace early in the afternoon when they prepared to rehearse. Seeing my reluctance to leave them, Gaby asked Bernac if he minded my staying.

"Of course not," he said. "He can turn the pages for you."

Standing behind Gaby, I saw the music as a white page with blurred grey notes. She played the accompaniment and Bernac sang to rows of empty seats.

The first page ended with a descending scale, which I saw as a streak. I managed to turn it correctly, but on the second page I could make out nothing and I knew I should never be able to bluff my way through.

I kept my gaze fixed on Gaby's head, thinking she might nod at the point where the page should be turned. They halted in mid-phrase. Bernac sighed with disgust—the disgust of a master musician who wondered how another musician could fail to follow such a simple score.

I apologized, muttering, "The light is so poor in here."

They passed it off gently. Perhaps a glance was

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exchanged. I knew Gaby had long suspected. I wondered in view of the abrupt change in Bernac's manner, if he did not suspect also. He offered me a chair on the empty stage and the two continued without my help.

I had no doubt Bernac had guessed the truth when he began to sing a berceuse, of Gounod, I think; for he turned directly to me. At the point where the mother tells the child to close its eyes, Bernac leaned over me and sang *ferme tes yeux* in a whisper, pleadingly, tenderly, infusing the words with direct meaning. The texture of my flesh changed and I lowered my head, unable to bear the evocation he created.

His voice moved away from me as he continued. Strange understanding was born in the empty hall, unspoken but sung on music and words from the past that communicated all their subtlety to the moment at hand.

And yet no mention was made of it afterward.

WHEN THEY HAD FINISHED rehearsing, I left them and walked across the street to the Hotel d'Albe. Climbing the narrow wooden steps to the third floor, I asked myself why I had not simply told them. But the answer was clear. I feared myself. I was not able to cope with the temptation to play the tragic figure. My silence was the only guarantee against falling into that trap.

I opened the door to my room. Lighted by one dormer window and sparsely furnished with a bed, writing table and washstand, it gave out its welcome hints of poverty and warmth.

My desk and bed were stacked with scores of Bach, Mozart, Chopin, Stravinsky and Hindemith, and with 20-franc volumes of paperback classics. During these weeks, with the aid of a large magnifying glass, I buried myself in the works of Heraclitus, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. They refreshed the dim certainties within, assuring me that I had a will that was free, and therefore a right to see that tragedy lay not in a given condition, but merely in man's concepts of that condition. My fiercest struggles, I knew, would not be against blindness, but against the pressures of men's opinions about blindness. I hated in advance the assaults of public opinion that would surround me and judge my condition tragic.

I knew that there were truths in this that I had not found, and that I must find them or risk being sucked into the vortex of society's castrating pity. These truth were not in the platitudes:

You must not be bitter.

You must take this thing like a man.

They meant nothing. They were mere etiquette unless founded on a deeper source. My fear of blindness lay not in the handicap, I realized, but in the risk of its forcing me to adopt a role—the "brave blind man" role—that might perhaps edify others even while it corroded me with its falsity.

Alone and unguided I sought attitudes that would legitimately lead me to the kind of acceptance I knew I must have. I asked myself: "If this had not happened to you, another soldier would have been there that night. Would you prefer this happened to you or to another?"

Then I could say, with no mental reservations: "Thank God it happened to me and not to another." That way there was peace. It was a beginning.

I read and analyzed music with my magnifying glass. The jubilant mystery of Mozart—that second innocence or "second naïveté" as Einstein called it, preoccupied me. I sought to analyze from the black notes on white paper, to catch this supreme secret, for it contained the answer to the way I wanted to go . . . not musically but psychologically or spiritually. And when the headaches started I paced the floor and smoked cigarettes and raged with some focusless love. I could make no sense of any of it.

My window gave a view into the flower-filled courtyard below. I looked down on the heads and shoulders of conservatory students who sat on benches doing their lessons in harmony and counterpoint. And I marveled at the sight of hair and flesh and the evidence of intelligence as they worked. A floor below and to my left I saw Bernac and Robert Casadesus look out the window of Bernac's room. All of it registered. All of it was new. Sunlight glistened from Casadesus' balding crown. Lichen grew up the stone wall and touched Bernac's unheeding fingers on the win-

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dowsill. It was enough. I saw these things as few others would be privileged to see them—with a sense of astonishment. I stored them, engraved them, not in my mind but in some deeper place of the passions.

I became aware of the guilt of jaded eyes. I had hated not the unbeautiful, as is right, but the unattractive. Now I was given a few months in which to make up for the times when I had walked along streets and had not deigned to look, when I had turned away from good hearts because they were hid behind unattractive physical features.

Faced with nothing, very little became everything. The sight of a pin, a hair, a leaf, a glass of water—these filled me with trembling excitement. The plants in the courtyard, the cobblestones, the lampposts, the faces of strangers—I no longer took them in and bound them up in me—they retained their values, their own identities and essences. I went out to them, immersed myself in them and found them more beautiful than I ever dreamed they could be. They taught, they nourished when one gave oneself to them.

Dusk brought me face to face with the inevitable question. How did a man without sight find love? Was it possible in the human realm to love what one could not see? Was not love a thing of glances and half-gestures?

The question loomed murky when one tried to solve it alone. But the strange light of fascination shone through. It was like the light I sometimes saw in kitchens when I walked outside in the evenings. How often I dreamed of the time when I would belong in such a kitchen, enclosed there from dusk with my wife and children while another walked outside and noticed the glow and dreamt of his time at it.

The room chilled rapidly with sunset. I took off my clothes and, shivering, bathed in the half-light, using a sponge and the pitcher of unheated water from my washstand. Soap and fresh clothes destroyed the somberness. It was time to go to Bernac's recital and then to dinner with my friends.

THE LIGHT OF DEDICATION and its example—like the light in the kitchen. I lived surrounded by it.

At dinner after the concert, I looked at Casadesus' hands, those hands that were not ashamed to practice the simplest passage for hours. I looked into the faces of Bernac and Gaby and Nadia Boulanger and saw work and sacrifice and devotion. I thought of the years of preparation in lonely rooms before they showed the world the finished product of art's past mastery.

After dinner we walked to a sidewalk cafe near the palace where we sat under an awning and drank the unripe beer they served in postwar France. From an overhead speaker, Edwin Fischer's performance of the Beethoven *Emperor* Concerto sang out into the darkness of cobblestoned streets. The bitter fragrance of Casadesus' pipe tobacco permeated the chill night air.

Students, exalted by beer and Bernac's concert, talked too loudly about music—about Schoenberg, Krenek and Stravinsky while in the yellow lamplight Beethoven surrounded us.

Casadesus glowered at them and muttered about "the little respect they have for music." He leaned across the table and touched my hand with his pipe stem. "Why do you stay here and listen to this conversation?"

"God knows," I said.

"You should be out finding yourself a wife. You should marry now. At your age you should spend all your time making love. . . ."

His wife said, "But since when do you stick your nose into other people's business?"

Casadesus puffed his pipe benignly. "It is better to make love than to discuss theory, my friend. You learn more about art and truth that way. I don't understand why you stay here. If I were you I'd go back to—"

"Why do you stay here?" I asked.

"Because I'm old. It's my duty. I'm now an 'educator,' " he sneered at the word. "But you—you are young. I don't understand why you don't leave this silly conversation—get up and walk away. . . ."

"Because he wants to hear the Beethoven, perhaps—in peace and without your interference," Madame Casadesus suggested pleasantly.

The final cadence of the Beethoven sounded into the night. Bernac rose, stretched and said, "I think I'll go turn in. Come, walk back to the hotel with me."

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After saying good-night, we returned to the hotel, his hand on my elbow, guiding me.

"You won't find what you're looking for here, you know," he said casually. "That's what Robert was trying to tell you."

"I know. . . ."

"You find what you're looking for alone—never in a crowd," he said. "You won't get it from Robert or Gaby or Nadia or me. We can give you a hint perhaps—show you that you work hard and don't despise loneliness – nothing much more. Each of us had to do it alone. It would have been worthless, commonplace, if we hadn't."

We remained silent until we entered the hotel courtyard.

"Can I ask you something?" he said.

"Of course. . . ."

"Your eyesight . . . why do you keep it a secret?"

"You just said you had to do it alone. If I told, I'd be in the midst of a crowd."

"I see. Will it get worse."

"Yes."

"Soon?"

"Yes—it goes fast now."

I heard him make a clucking sound and felt his hand drop away from my elbow as though the touch suddenly burned him.

Mail lay under the door when I entered my room. I picked it up and carried it to my table. With the reading glass, I studied the top letter from Marie-Bruno Hussar, O.P., written from the Dominican *Couvent St. Jacques* in Paris. Friar Marie-Bruno told me that he had received extraordinary permission to have me visit him during the novitiate, and that he would expect me early the next month. "I can see you during my free time. Your stay here will be a good transition between Fontainebleau and the studies you will make at the Abbey of Solesmes."

At the end, he added: "My poor friend, why are you so determined to be brave? Bravery of this sort is nothing more than a mask. You must work toward finding a way that will not require masks. . . ."

INSOMNIA. I sat on the edge of my bed in pajamas and drank a glass of red wine. The diluted amber light of a single globe surrounded me as I listened to the silences of the hotel.

Sleep was a waste. I put it off, wanting it but fighting against it. I felt I should later begrudge every moment passed in darkness that might have been passed in light.

But the wine drugged my heart and intestines, and sleep pressed heavily. I turned off the light at the wall switch and walked barefoot across the wooden floor to my bed.

I was almost asleep when footsteps rumbled on the stairs. The hope that someone might be coming to see me rose like panic in my chest. But if some friend should come and see no light under my door, he would go away. I hurried to the wall and raked my hand across it to flip on the switch.

With my ear against the door I listened to muffled voices.

"I hope this will be all right for tonight. Tomorrow I can put you in a much nicer room downstairs." I visualized the proprietor, a fat middle-aged man who smiled constantly.

"I'm sure it'll be fine," a woman said in a full mature voice. A man mumbled agreement.

A key grated in the lock and I heard the door bump against the thin wall that separated their room from mine.

"Here are towels. I think you'll find the bed comfortable. The w.c. is directly across the hall. Good night, and may you rest well," the proprietor said.

I turned off my lights and listened to the proprietor shuffle heavily down the stairs.

"Are you tired?" the man asked from the adjoining room.

"No . . ." the woman answered tentatively.

I listened to their footsteps, to the sounds of unpacking, to the silence, realizing that this was the way I would know all things in the future, by sounds.

They talked little. I judged them to be a couple long married who no longer needed many words to communicate. The ease of their silence extended to me.

In darkness, seated on the floor with my back to the wall, I followed their movements.

Keys and coins jingled and I knew the man removed his pants.

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The woman coughed and almost immediately sniffed. Shod footsteps became the padding of bare feet.

I imagined how it was—the two of them alone in the room as they had been alone in countless rooms during countless past nights. They prepared for bed, putting on their nightclothes.

Water gurgled into a glass. A moment later the glass thumped against a saucer when it was replaced.

Bare footsteps moved to the door.

"All right?" the man asked.

"All right," she said above creaking bed springs.

I heard a click. He walked toward the bed cautiously now, his cadence altered by darkness.

I sat motionless and listened to them settle into bed. I thought of them lying side by side under the same covers, relaxing. Did they lie on their backs, I wondered, or face to face? It did not matter. What mattered was that they were there together, sharing the warmth.

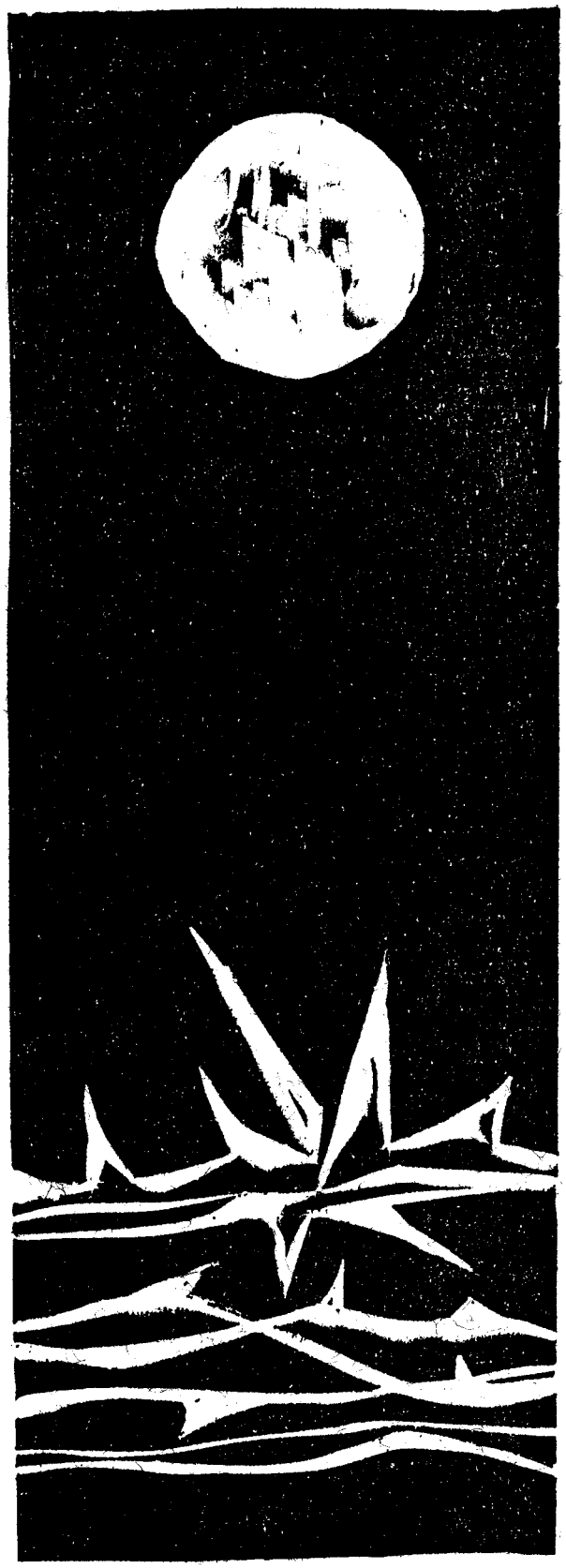
Cold air poured through my open window, chilling me, but I was reluctant to move. The invisible scene with its overtones of confidence and sharing stirred me to my deepest hungers. A middle-aged couple went to bed, as they did all over the world in all times; but at that moment they showed me something essential to the heart. My longing was fixed on this quiet thing of drifting off to sleep in dim awareness that part of myself slept beside me.

II

For the next few weeks, I visited the home of old pre-war friends, the Jacques Duthoos, in Tours, where I had lived as a student during my adolescence.

The blurring and headaches came more frequently. Because the Duthoos were people of great kindness, my presence was painful to them. Each time I ran into furniture, I raged with embarrassment and they stood silently by. I made them miserable, despite their protests of delight to have me.

I wanted almost desperately to go somewhere where I could make the transition into blindness in solitude. Hopefully I wrote a letter to Marie-



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Bruno of the Dominicans in Paris, asking him to seek permission for me to return there. I felt a great substructure of weakness within myself and believed that the monastic routine would provide the strength and calm to make it bearable, even though I had no intentions of becoming a Catholic.

Meanwhile, I spent more and more time away from the house. I revisited old haunts where I had spent such happy years in my adolescence. Tours was a city of parks and fountains and many bridges over the rivers, a city steeped in history. Every cobblestone gave up its echo of the past, recalling the Kings of France and some of her saints, recalling Ronsard and Balzac and Rabelais. I walked as I had done countless times as a lonely schoolboy, under a radiant autumn sun where they had walked and saw what they had seen.

Each day, late in the afternoon, I bought a sack of chestnuts, as much for the pleasure of talking with the vendor as for eating them. We became friendly in the casual way of people who meet frequently. He was from Chinon nearby – "there where Rabelais came from," he said with pride.

It occurred to me that I had never seen a blind man in Tours, a city of some 60,000 inhabitants. I asked him about this one afternoon.

"There are some, Monsieur. Pitiful things. One of them lives in my neighborhood, over near *les Halles*."

"What's his name?"

"Who knows? They call him l'Aveugle. That's all I've ever heard."

"How long has he been blind?"

"I've lived in the quarter thirty-five years now. He's been that way ever since I can remember."

"Do you think he'd talk with me?"

"Oh, he's grouchy as hell. You might have to buy some of his junk first."

"He's a vendor?"

"A beggar, really. He begs postcards, books—any kind of trash. Then hawks it on the street."

I left him and walked through the old quarter, where balconies of houses dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries almost touched overhead across the narrow cobblestone streets. These streets convered on *Les Halles*, a large open square where executions had once been held, a market place that dated from the Middle Ages. At this hour of the day it was crowded with workers returning to their homes from work. I saw no one who might be *l'Aveugle*.

I went into a dingy cafe and shouldered my way through the aperitif drinkers toward the bar. The barman told me *l'Aveugle* had a room in a corner house "three doors down."

I drank a glass of sour red wine and walked out into the sudden chill of the square. The sun hung like a cold blue orb above the bakery shop, filtered of color by the haze of smoke from cooking fires.

The low entrance to the house "three doors down" was so low I had to stoop. Inside, I slowly raised my head to a somber foyer a yard square, with a door on each side and stairsteps ahead. I tried the door on the right. It opened into a black hole of a foul-smelling w.c. I knocked on the door to the left and it opened a crack.

"Pardon, Madame. I'm looking for *l'Aveugle*."

"Mount the stairs, then, Monsieur. Last door on the right."

I FELT MY WAY along the dark hall of the upper landing. At the last door, I heard the sound of a news broadcast from a radio—strange sound in a city where radios were not common and in a quarter where they would be expensive luxuries. I tapped on the door. Footsteps shuffled within and stopped on the other side of the door.

"Who is there, please?" I heard an aged voice, soft and covered, a strangely cultivated voice; not the sour tones the chestnut vendor had led me to expect.

"You don't know me. But I should like to talk with you."

"I'm ready for bed. Do you want to buy something?"

"Yes. . . ."

"You are alone?"

"Yes. . . ."

"One moment, please."

His footsteps moved slowly away from the door. After a time he called from across the room. "You may come in now."

I opened the door, prepared to hate what I saw, expecting a view of poverty and blind disorder. Light from his window showed me an immaculately clean and cheerful room. Even the stale,

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filthy odor of the hall was obliterated by the fragrance of lavender water.

L'Aveugle, an elderly and stooped man, with white hair and thin aristocratic features, finished tying the belt of an expensive red-and-black striped silk robe over his white brocade pajamas. His skeletal feet were encased in red leather house-slippers of an expensive cut. I thought I had got into the wrong room, but then he spoke: "Talk, please, so I know where you are."

"Yes sir. I'm right here."

"You must excuse me. I retire early."

"Please . . . I shouldn't have come so late."

"What do you wish to buy?"

"Perhaps a book. . . ."

"I'll show you what I have," he said gently. I watched him kneel and drag a box from under his bed.

"Sit down if you wish. There's a chair by the window," he said.

I glanced out to dusk light on a small and cluttered courtyard behind the house. Across the way, sallow lights were turned on in other rooms and shutters were being closed.

On the table beside me, the radio's light gleamed, downstreaking the oil cloth with yellow. I had obviously interrupted his supper. Half-eaten on a plate lay slices of buttered bread and salami. A tall bottle of unlabeled red wine stood beside a partially filled glass.

The old man stacked books on his bed. His clothes, neatly folded over another chair near his armoire, contrasted oddly to his splendid night apparel: they were the ragged, filthy clothes of a pariah.

"Should I close your shutters?" I asked. "It's getting dark."

"Yes, please," he said, lifting an armload of books and carrying them to the table.

As I closed the shutters to a view of twilight on rubble, I wondered how I should ever get back to the Duthoos.

"There, you may find something interesting," he said. "Are you a scholar?"

"A student. Yes sir."

"You talk like an educated man."

"So do you, Sir."

"I learn it all from the radio," he sighed. "In the evenings, for years, I have come home and listened to the radio until time to sleep. I'm a slave to that machine," he laughed. "Without it I would have gone mad long ago."

I asked his permission to turn on the light.

"Of course. I forget others must have electricity when it gets dark," he apologized. "There's a new bulb there. I always turn on the light when I close the blinds."

"You have some sight then?"

"No . . . it's just that I cannot bear the idea of sitting in the darkness. Though I have never seen it, I like the idea of light."

I lifted a large book to the drop-light and examined its title.

"Do you find anything?" he asked.

"I don't know," I said.

"Read the titles to me, will you?" he asked. "I never know really what I have."

I deciphered the large printing. "*Pages choisies* of Pierre Loüys."

"Really?"

"Yes. And here's *Balthazar* of Anatole France. And here's Maeterlinck's *La grande porte.*"

As I continued through the stack, I became aware of a mood of intense pleasure in the old man. I saw the scene as though detached from it—the two of us sat at his table under lamplight on a cold autumn's evening. He leaned forward, an expression of concentration on his seamed face, his blue eyes alive but focusless.

My attention was jerked back to the volume in my hand, an obvious piece of pornography. I flipped through to glimpse hazed drawings of sexual orgies and then set the book to one side.

He heard the page-flipping and the rustle as I placed the book on the table.

"What was that one?" he asked quickly.

I told him and watched his face tighten with anger. "They give me these things. I have no way, no way of knowing what they are, you understand. They think it amusing to give me these things. Twice I've been selling obscene cards without knowing. All right if some man wants to buy them. But I'm afraid to show my supply to women or children, afraid they'll see something

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like that and judge me a hawker of filth."

"Couldn't you get someone to go through them for you?"

"Who? I am alone. I have no one in the world." He hesitated a moment. "Can I tell you something, Monsieur?"

"Of course."

"You're the first person who's ever read these titles to me. You can't imagine what it means to me. Twelve years ago a letter came for me. I carried it for days, not even knowing who it was from. I could have asked someone in the street, but you get timid about such things." His voice thickened slightly. "Finally, do you know?—I took it to St. Martin's and asked one of the Fathers to read it for me. I'm a free-thinker, not a Catholic, but I took it there. He read it for me. It was a tax notice. Since then, until tonight, no one has read a word to me. I get everything from the radio, Monsieur."

His frail body trembled with an emotion that astonished me. "It is cold. I'm sorry I have no fire," he said shakily.

"Shall I go on?"

"Please."

"*Hölderlin* by Stephan Zweig."

"Who was Hölderlin?" he asked in a thin voice. His trembling rose to a paroxysm.

"A painter, I think."

"Would it be asking too much, Monsieur . . . yes, of course it would," he sighed.

"What?"

"If you would read me just one line . . . a sentence anywhere."

Without my reading glass I could not hope to decipher the body text. "The light is too poor, I'm afraid," I said, feeling my own voice grow unsteady. "I could come back tomorrow and read to you."

He nodded his head as though he accepted the disappointment but did not believe me. I struggled with a page, holding it almost against my eye, but the lines were fuzzy grey streaks.

I heard the question within me: "My God, is this the way it is? Is it so bad that a man goes to pieces at the emotion of having a few book titles read to him?—that he begs for a sentence, any sentence from a book?"

"There are other scabrous books here," I said. "Do you want me to separate them?"

"Please . . . if you would."

I arranged them in separate stacks and placed his hand on the stack nearest him. "These are the books you'd not want to show women or children."

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"It is foul of them to give me these things," he said with dignity and hatred. "They think it's amusing."

I chose a book I thought he would probably not sell to anyone else: *Les problèmes non rèsolus de la science*, by Haslett, and asked him the price.

"Thirty-five francs," he said cautiously.

I counted the money into his beggar's hand that protruded from the sleeves of his princely robe.

"Will you have a glass of wine with me?" he asked.

I accepted and watched him pour, quite expertly. He held his finger over the lip of the glass and judged its fullness by pouring until the wine touched his fingertip.

He did not clink glasses at the toast, as would most people of the quarter, but offered it like an aristocrat, in a raised gesture, and said: "To your good health."

"To yours," I answered and sipped at the wine.

He gazed toward me, his eyes a blare. "What brought you here, I wonder?" he asked, his voice deep in his throat.

In the background, the slick-jazz music of a Paris orchestra bounced against the room's stone walls.

"I don't really know, Monsieur," I said.

"You didn't come for a book though. Did you?"

"No sir."

"Did you come to see a blind man?" He leaned toward me, his face covering my entire field of vision, consuming me.

"Yes sir. . . ."

The jazz raked across us.

"Why?" his voice exploded the word, softly, as though he dreaded the answer.

I wished for silence. The room needed silence. But we heard the cheap upsurge of saxophones and clarinets.

"Because I hoped to learn something from you."

"Learn from me? What, for example?"

"How you do things? How you live? What it's like? . . ."

He drew back as though I had slapped him. "Good night, Monsieur," he said with dignity.

"You don't understand," I said. "It wasn't morbid curiosity."

"What then? A sociological study? – How a blind beggar—"

"No . . . no. . . . Believe me."

His voice sharpened with resentment. "Why should you want to know what it's like to be like me?"

"Because that's the way I'll soon be," I answered with equal sharpness, throwing it into his face.

He blanched and the flesh crumpled around his mouth. No matter what reassurances he might give me, I knew the truth of his reaction at that moment on his face. He was visibly, severely stunned.

"I know nothing about it, nothing at all," I said. "I've never even talked with anyone who's had such an experience. I thought I could get an idea of what it was like. . . ."

His voice cut in, rasping and far too loud. "How old are you?"

"Twenty-six."

"A child. God damn. A child. Are you married?"

"No sir."

Music from the radio filled the silence between us:

He was a beautiful sailor boy
Who brought into port my fullest joy

the woman sang militantly, savagely.

The cold penetrated our clothing. Both of us trembled uncontrollably.

"You have a family?" he asked more gently.

"In America, yes."

"Will you have more wine? We can talk."

"I'm keeping you up—and it's so cold."

He rose to his feet and stood motionless for a long time, supporting himself with one hand on the table.

"Have you had supper?" he asked without opening his eyes.

"No sir."

"Ah," he smiled and slapped his hands together to create a different atmosphere. "Then I tell you. Let's eat. I have blankets. We can wrap up. Come, we will enjoy ourselves, eh? We will talk all night if you wish. It's not really so bad, you know. When one thinks of it, it's not really so bad. You

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see, I have nice things—nice room, a radio. I'm king here."

THE DISCOMFORT DROPPED from between us. We were two people safe in a closed room, separated from the rest of the world by the night. We had something in common, so deeply felt that it destroyed all barriers.

"I tell you, I have good clothes in that armoire," he boasted. "Someday I may have a friend, someone like you perhaps. And he'll take me to a nice restaurant for dinner – one of the really fine places."

"I'll take you. . . ."

"Would you?" he cackled with pleasure, as a father at some nice gesture from his child. "I'd pay for it, of course. Now—" he grimaced and reached for the radio, but drew his hand back. "Do you like this music?"

"God no. I've been wanting to change it myself."

"Good. Tell me if I come to something you like. And there are blankets in the armoire if you'd not mind getting them. You are at home here."

He spun the dial and stopped on a woman's chorus from England. They sang a bouncy madrigal-like arrangement of a religious song.

"It's nice, eh?" he said. "Do you understand the words?"

"Yes sir. Hold Jesus, dear Jesus, in your arms like a lamb."

"*Merde*," he whispered. "It sounded like it might be something." He turned the dial again. "There, that's good, I know."

A jubilant sequential passage from a Handel violin sonata turned the atmosphere festive.

I placed one of the blankets around his stooped shoulders. He fingered the table edge and drew his chair around to the correct angle before it. Wrapped in the other blanket, I took my seat while he cut slabs of bread and salami for me.

We fell easily into conversation about blindness, not agonizing this time, for the pleasures we felt in one another's company, in drinking the wine and eating the food, over-rode the somberness of our subject.

"I can teach you," he laughed. "I'll make you the most accomplished beggar on the continent. There's nothing else we can do in a provincial town. No jobs, not even the humblest. But begging is fine as long as you don't believe what you're doing. You must live two lives, keep your self-respect even when you act as though you had lost it completely."

The idea of becoming the old man's begging protegé excited my imagination.

"You are intelligent. You would learn quickly. And there is much to learn—an entire new way of living. The worst thing is the loneliness. A blind man needs a great friendship, more even than he needs a woman. I've never had a friend, but you must have. The loneliness is too terrible otherwise. When I was younger, I thought of taking a wife—one of those women who pledge themselves to marry only the maimed or disabled. But at the last moment I couldn't. Self-respect becomes the only important thing—it saves your life, really. I would have to marry a woman I won right, who wouldn't be reserved for me like a pension check just because I was blind. Can you imagine what that would do to a man?—to know that a woman slept with you not because she loved you but because she loved God!"

"Yes sir. . . ."

"If you give in on one point like that, you're defeated. They have won."

"Who's that?"

"They—those out there—the sighted ones. They want you to be a certain way—they castrate you of self-respect thinking they help you. Sometimes I hate them, Monsieur . . . in their arrogance and superiority. But it's stupid to hate them. And sometimes a saint voice breathes in your ear for just a moment—out of all the clutter of sound—and then the love for humanity comes back. You will experience this. It is a great mystery to me. I am not a man of faith. I hate pious unction. But when you are blind people will reveal themselves to you, knowing you can never identify them. They will show themselves to you as they never would to another. Most are ordinary, dull. But you quickly come to see that some are saints and some are satanic. I have had elderly men and women, Monsieur—I could smell their dentures—with the odor of incense from Mass or Benediction fresh on their clothes, whisper to me—things

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that only Satan could utter."

His distinguished face hovered before me, his eyes closed, the long wrinkles of his cheeks deeply shadowed in lamplight. "And again, others smelling the same, have shown me hints of the most extraordinary graces . . . souls like the sunlight." His voice dropped to a dead tone: "What do you do about women? Do you go to whores? I ask you this because when you are blind everything changes. Everything is either crushed or it becomes slightly exaggerated. It takes a certain hardness inside you—a callousness —to go to the whores. What will you do about sex?"

"I've wondered about that myself," I said.

"That's the great trap," he said. "You see me? I am a puritan. We blind people almost have to become that way. But you can avoid this horrible sickness if you know about it in advance and can guard against it. We can't evade the sexual impasse like the sighted can. It is such a burning point with us that it turns us puritanical. I believe it's the worst of our handicap. I realize it now, but I'm too old to change. I know better in my mind, but I can't persuade my body and my heart. I freeze with loathing for everything that brings sex to my attention. When I was younger, I had a great craving for love. It is difficult to explain it to you. A person with sight can see in a glance that someone has affection for him. He sees a thousand indications of it—he even has a sort of union with everyone he sees. With us, all of that is gone. We know people only by their voices. And the voice doesn't really tell much. It comes out of the air. When it is tired, it sounds exactly the same as when it is sick or angry or disgusted. It is not enough. We unite by touch. And you can't go around touching people the way a sighted person can go around looking at them. When no one touches you, you crave even a handshake, the feel of something human. With a friend you can have that. He will throw his arm around your shoulder or nudge you in the ribs. Even that is enough. But without it, you crave, you crave. . . ."

He pushed the wine bottle over the oilcloth toward me. I took it and filled our glasses.

"You think I exaggerate? No, it is a very great thing. You thought nothing of putting the blanket around my shoulders just now. To me it was—*Dieu*, how could I begin to tell you. . . ."

He realized only then that he had not offered me butter for my sandwiches. He hastily brought it out of a small upright cupboard with gauze-covered doors deside his chair. I noted his accuracy in reaching for it.

"I judge everything from the location of the radio," he explained. "I know just how many centimetres to the right of that sound I keep my butter. You will learn these things. Indeed they are the least of it. It is the affections that present the problems. Do you know what my name is?"

"No sir. . . ."

"I've lived in this quarter almost fifty years. Not a soul knows my name. Not that I would keep it a secret. God no, I should like to hear my name called. They never think to ask. You see, I am not an individual—not Pierre or François or Charles like the rest of them. What do I hear when I walk down the street? *Bonjour, Monsieur l'Aveugle*. I have no name—only a condition. I am known, but not for who I am, only for what I am. I tell you these things not to complain, but to show you what you must do. You must become more a man than blind—overpower the condition of blindness with some individuality. And you must find some way not to kill your love. People don't understand about this. What are you, sitting there? To me you are nothing, really. But if I touch your hand, you become something. There is something terribly wrong, isn't there, something terribly wrong?"

He drank from his glass, more rapidly this time. Then he raised his skeletal hands to massage across his forehead, hiding his face.

FROM THE RADIO I heard an announcement that Marguerite Long would be soloist in the recording of Mozart's Concerto Number 23 in A. Almost immediately the opening measures of this ravishing music poured out into the room between us.

With his face still covered, the old man spoke, his voice somehow catching hints of serenity from the music. "I'll tell you something terrible, because you'll feel these things, too. When I was young like you, this craving for affection got so

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bad I went to the prostitutes. Do you know why? Not because of sex, really, but because there, at least, someone would touch me. I'd get so desperate I'd try to buy affection. I searched for some true warmth when they put their arms around me. And I never, never once found it. Their embraces were no more real than if I'd laid in a mannequin's arms. I hated them for it. Each time, I felt sick because there was never that special touch or that soft expression in their voices. Each time I swore I would never go back. And always I did. Always I hoped. Finally, I realized I would never have the peace of affection unless the gods sent me either a real wife or a real friend. I started hating what is really good, because it hurt so desperately. I was virile, but I blocked sex out of my life long ago because I could never feed it with the affections. By itself, without affection, it is worse than nothing. I killed it like one kills a well-loved animal who will otherwise torture you by starving to death before your eyes. But one can't really kill it, you know," he added into his hands. "At night, sometimes in summer even now, I pass the park and hear lovers. I imagine them with their arms around one another—and taking all of that for granted, perhaps not even feeling half of the touches. I feel like going to them and shouting: 'Do you know what you have? Do you know what it means to be able to touch someone? . . .' " His voice trailed off as though he could find no further words to express the immensity of it.

I felt his despair in my own belly, mingling with the long and moving phrases of the Mozart and with the rich odor of salami.

"It's strange I can talk about this at all," he said. He dropped his hands and smiled uncertainly. "I tell you these things because you must not be cheated the way I feel I have been cheated. No, that's not it. It's because you are here and there's warmth in you. To me, for these few moments, it's almost as though you were the friend I've never had. I can talk to you about sex or love without that feeling of nausea because there is safety in here between us. Do you understand that?"

"I think so," I said and drank again, my fourth or fifth glass.

"Did you have enough to eat?"

When I assured him I had, he rose to his feet and began stacking the dishes. He wrapped the bread in a piece of cotton toweling, lifted my glass, felt that it was almost empty and replenished it.

The Mozart absorbed our attention as it entered the slow movement, piano and orchestra in a dialogue of contemplative tenderness. He stood with one hand on the table, the blanket around his shoulders, his head slightly raised, staring toward the ceiling. His hand on the table began to shake as though he were struck with palsy.

"Could I ask you something?"

"Of course," I said.

"You are the first person who's ever visited me—who's ever been easy with me. There may never be another. . . ." He hesitated. An awkward silence settled between us.

"What is it?" I asked finally.

"I'm afraid it might offend you. . . ."

"I doubt it," I laughed.

His voice rattled deep in his throat. "Would you let me feel how your face is?"

His tone of intense dread and longing sent shock through me.

"Certainly," I said.

"It is not repugnant to you?"

"Not in the slightest." I removed my glasses and lifted his hand to my face.

His fingertips were like ice to my flesh, timid and trembling.

"It's very moving to me," he apologized. Then his touch became more certain as he explored my temples, my forehead, my jaws and around the front to my nose and lips. I smelled the faint odor of castile soap and salami on his hands. His face bore the sharpened stamp of total absorption.

"Is you hair blond?"

"Brown. . . ."

"Your eyes?"

"Greenish-blue, I think. . . ."

"They are deep sunk."

"Yes sir."

His fingers, hard as sticks, moved over my head to the nape of my neck again and again, trembling less. His features relaxed as though a vast calm entered him. His hands drifted reluctantly away and rested on the table.

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"I could teach you to be a good beggar," he said.

"Thank you. . . ."

"You could live here with me, perhaps."

"I honestly wish I could. But I'm leaving soon. And after I lose my sight, I'll have to return to America to attend schools for the blind."

"I see. . . ."

"In fact, I'm afraid I have to be going now. I'm visiting friends here. Only I'm not sure how I'll get back. I can't see enough to get around after dark."

"Then stay with me," he said eagerly. "The bed is double. I sleep quietly. We could talk all night if you wanted to."

"My hosts will surely become alarmed if I don't return," I explained.

"Well, if you feel you must go, I can take you there. I know the town well. Where do they live?"

"Rue Jules Simon, number twenty-three."

"An elegant part of town," he said in disappointment. "You are a rich man?"

I felt overtones of humiliation that he had dared suggest a rich man become his pupil, live with him, be his friend.

"No, I'm sure I'm much poorer that you are," I reassured him.

He talked rapidly while he changed into his ragged day clothes.

"I hope you realize what this has meant to me. I have had a visitor, Monsieur. We have dined and drunk together at my table. Do you know that during all my years here—nearly half a century—I've never before had someone for supper? Do you know that I never before touched a grown man's face? And I never shall again. I know that. It's too much to hope that another will come here as you did, and then stay for a time as you did. You, my poor friend, are the one big thing that has ever happened to me. I know you won't believe it. But it's true. Come, I'll take you home now."

With his left hand clutched around my arm above the elbow, he guided me down the hall to the accompaniment of light tapping from his heavy stick. "Fine now," he whispered. "A few more steps and we are at the stairs. There. Step down. Careful."

Despite the chill, we walked slowly, far more slowly than was necessary. We strolled past massed houses from which no light showed. We

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talked softly, as friends with no barriers between us, speaking to express the pleasure we felt in one another's company.

"Here we are, young man," he said at last. He squared me gently so that I felt the high metal grill gate that led into the Duthoo courtyard against my back.

"How did you ever know to stop exactly at this spot?" I asked.

"All the *virtuosi* are not in the concert halls," he laughed. "I know that twent-three is the Duthoo mansion. And I know that the Duthoo mansion is set back from the street with a garden in front, whereas the mansions on either side are set on the street, with gardens in back. So when I hear my cane tap with a hollow sound, I know we are where we should be. . . ."

I realized I had forgotten my book, but said nothing about it. He would probably never know, and he might be able to sell it again.

"Can you see anything at all?" he asked.

"Not in this darkness."

"You are like me now," he said tentatively. His hand descended my arm and came to rest in my hand. It was time to say good-bye.

Neither of us could think of anything to say. No easy words came. I felt him tense beside me. His breathing rasped suddenly.

"What is it?" I asked uneasily.

His fingers contracted like wires around my hand. "I hate it for you," he groaned. "We don't think it's so bad when it happens to us. We get used to it. Then we see it happen to somebody else. Then we realize how horrible it is. There's no way . . . no way. . . ." His voice ground out the words in despair.

He released me suddenly and his cane tapped wildly away. For a moment I thought of going after him. But at that speed, and without his skills, I knew I could never catch him. I leaned against the grill, felt frost on the iron bite into the back of my head and listened to his cane dim into silence. A sullen pressure filled my throat and I hoped I should not have to talk with anyone before I got to my room.

MOUNTING THE DARK STAIRS, it occurred to me that he never did tell me his name, and that he did not know mine.

Three letters lay on my bed in my room. One from my parents in America, cheerful, filled with confidence. I thought of *l'Aveugle* with no family to protect him from the raging loneliness that afflicted him.

The next letter, from Marie-Bruno, informed me that they would be unable to have me come and stay, since the rule allowed for the visit only of retreatants for brief periods. He went on:

> *Now the calm tone of your letter allows me to dare to speak to you of the manner in which you might accept this loss of sight. You are being given an opportunity to offer a great sacrifice to God, and thereby to grow in spirit. If you can accept this, abandon yourself to God's infinite dynamism, in a short time you will surely enjoy peace and the knowledge of how to find God in this darkness.*
>
> *It is not easy. It might even be impossible without the grace of God. The secret is in this, that we can not make progress if we try to follow our own inclinations; but we must rather seek God's will,* even where it most conflicts with our desires. *This is a very great love, in a very great docility, until our every thought, our every action and reaction even, is attuned not to ourselves but to the God within us.*

I sat on my bed and read the letter again and again, noting that Marie-Bruno had not forgotten to print a large script, far different from his usual miniature writing.

I recognized with some regret that for someone else these would be words of infinite wisdom. But I could no more fix my attention lovingly on God than I could on the wallpaper of my room. Even the thought filled me with intimate embarrassment. God meant nothing to me, to my great sorrow. He was an idea, the comfort of my youth, a myth worthy of my respect, nothing more.

The third letter was from the guestmaster at the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes, telling me they could offer me a vacant cell for a visit and that the Father Abbot would be happy to receive me; and that I would be allowed to work in the *Paléographie Musicale*. My years of dreaming

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about someday studying in this great citadel of learning were about to be realized.

I went to bed full of uncertainty and lay there in half-dreams in which the old *Aveugle* mingled. This was another move. Should I really go? Would it not be wiser—at least kinder—to stay here and learn from the old man, offer him the consolations of friendship? But no, I had made myself a promise years ago—always to take the new step. That alone decided me to leave, to abandon all I knew here in this well-loved city and go there to the unknown. As my body gathered warmth beneath the covers, Solesmes absorbed all my thoughts. I heard in imagination its silences, the great bells, the chants drifting down endless corridors of the cloister. . . .

THE NEXT DAY I took a last walk along the tree-lined ramparts of the Loire River. Thoughts of *l'Aveugle* preoccupied me, but I decided against seeing him again. We had said everything last night. Another visit would be painful for both of us.

Late in the afternoon the sky filled with thick black thunderheads. I turned back toward the Duthoo home, guided by the towering Gothic spires of the ancient Cathedral Saint-Gatien. First heavy drops of rain smacked against the cobblestones as I arrived in the cathedral square. Here, trees and buildings were reduced to miniature by the nearness and massiveness of the church. Lightning flickered constantly, pinpointing the ornate façade in greenish light against the black skies.

I hurried inside and mingled with the crowd. Long queues formed at each of the little upright coffins they used for confessional booths. They were all there—men, women and children, the wealthy and the poor—for Saturday evening confession.

I gazed at them through the dim light and wondered. Their world, their home-life, their ethics, their way of looking at things—all of that lay behind the fog of mystery to me. Were they at all like me? Did they have the same flashes of frightful temptation; did they harbor the beast in their bellies? If so, how could they pour out such filth into the unseen ear of the confessor?

A few prayed in the central portion of the church, their figures dwarfed by the vast heights. My hungers stirred painfully toward what they had found, but my mind congealed against it. In the building's gloom, lighted here and there by clusters of votive lamps, the intensity of prayers pervaded the atmosphere.

I felt alone and under an almost magnetic compulsion to enter the black-curtained confessional box. I rejected the idea but it returned insistently. After all, the priest would never know who I was and I should never know who he was. I would be in the dark talking to a voice that represented wisdom and faith. I would be speaking to a person vowed never to divulge what he heard. I had no one else in the world to talk with.

Then a statement from Gide came to mind. Referring to a group of nuns, he had observed how they cherished the pearl of their faith, never realizing it was a false pearl. He had added that as long as they did not realize it was a false pearl, perhaps it had the same value to them as a real one. I turned and walked away from the confessional, past statues of saints mounted on giant pedestals that loomed above me, past a young woman whose face was blank with prayer. I felt my body hang about me as an encumbrance; my feet, cold and sweating in my shoes, walked on removing me from contact with the false pearl. I strode toward the normalcy of cobblestone pavements and the noise of the world outside. But where could I go? I saw the world as nothing but an endless dusk leading me down a thousand alleys which I already knew ended nowhere. They ended nowhere unless one had a kitchen, a family, a bed and the brains and hearts of others to share.

The idea of returning to the Duthoos and sitting at a glittering dining table repelled me. I should not be there. They were a family sufficient unto themselves. The picture of them without me was better than the one with me.

My footsteps slowed and I sidled into an empty pew.

A veiled woman lighted votive candles at a nearby side altar. A cough reverberated in the obscurity. Drawing my coat more tightly about me, I shuddered. Odors of age and stone and humanity combined into a stench that stifled the spirit. I looked on the backs of kneelers who worshipped

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the pearl. Each stone of this immense structure had been laid centuries ago with devotion to the same pearl. Generations had worn the stone floors down with their footsteps. They had mumbled the same prayers, confessed the same sins, wasted how many energies and hopes on the false pearl?

I sat for a time in the rustling silence, and I felt myself drowse when the thought quietly settled in me. How did Gide know? True, I shared his belief, that the pearl was false. But how could we know? Did we, ourselves, possess the true one? If so, why were we so tormented? Marie-Bruno had said that the experience of faith teaches. Not having possessed this pearl, how could we know what it might teach or if in truth it were false?

The picture of myself was suddenly thrown coldly in my face. I saw a young man going blind, it is true, but clinging to all that was pathetic in it, mourning because of a faith denied him. He played the classic role after all, even while sincerely thinking he struggled against it. He cast his last lingering glances at the world, vaccilated endlessly for fear of compromising his precious intellectual integrity.

I felt blistered by self-contempt and embarrassed to catch myself in a falsity of which I was not even aware. But now, the self-indulged pathos shone clear and cheap in all its noble trappings of tragedy and sacrifice. I got up and stumped out of the cathedral, relieved to have been shown myself, even in such a brutal way. Filled with an upsurge of energy, I sloshed through the downpour to the *bureau de tabac* and bought a package of strong black cigarillos.

I RETURNED TO THE DUTHOOS' and sneered at my room which had been the locale of so much sadness. Stripping off my soaked clothes, I switched on the radio and plopped down in a chair. Rain gusted against my window, not the sad rain of the past weeks, but the pleasant rain of my youth, accenting elements of shelter and the taste of butter cookies near the hearth. The BBC Third Programme faded in over the warming hum of the radio. I listened a moment while an elderly British poetess chewed the crystal of her verses. Cutting her off in the middle of a squawk, I turned the dial. The needle paused at Radio-Paris where a massive-voiced soprano bellowed *Depuis le jour*.

"... tergiversation ..." the British poetess enunciated pleasantly as I passed her station again.

A full-bodied performance of Bach's second Brandenburg Concerto bounced into the room. I sank back in my chair, overwhelmed by the vigor and sanity of this music. It filled me with a jubilance that brought tears from my eyes. I lighted one of the strong cigarillos and let its aroma mingle with the Bach. So I would be blind. With such music and such smells, I could state it bluntly and laugh at it. So I would be blind. So, by all rights I should have been dead, buried somewhere in the Pacific. So, this was a new life, given free.

When the Bach ended, I switched off the radio and listened to the rain-filled silence. I heard the children's muffled voices and foosteps downstairs and smelled a lamb roast.

Dinner was festive that night. I drank much wine and ate with good appetite and joked with the children. It was a time of change, influenced by the Bach, the rain, the cathedral. I felt contempt for sadness. That was all right in the ordinary run of living. A man had to try to get a little of everything in his one life and be sad if he were deprived of some of it. But with me, it was different. If I should consider that I was killed back there, dead and gone; then my life was done and I no longer had to look for my little of everything. The years to come had been given me to live an experience which I was free to color any way I chose. I was no longer bound to the ordinary reactions. However it might go, I should have no regrets. If I should be reduced to begging in the street, then I should enjoy the feel of hot pavement beneath my shoes and the odors of asphalt and automobile exhausts. Good or bad fortune were equally attractive when viewed in such a context. Hunger was as interesting as satiety? A life without sight as interesting as a life with sight? Who was to say different? Society? The bulk of humanity? But they were living their first lives, cautiously aware that someday they would die. They had everything to lose. They could not take the risks. But I had been through death, had my insides burned out by it twice. I was living a second life, freed of those cautious awarenesses. I had nothing to lose. I could take all the risks.

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BLUE EYES

MELVIN WALKER LA FOLLETTE

SHE HAD BLUE EYES—like the heavenly blue flowers of the Santa Barbara ceanothus, like the mantilla from Andalucia, like bluejays. Her blue eyes came from a time when blue eyes were rare in California; from the time her great-great-grandfather governed that fabulous province in the name of the King of Spain. In those days, you could always tell an aristocrat: the peasants had the eyes of dogs, brown as the dung they groveled in; the Indians had eyes like cisterns, black and bottomless; but to her were the eyes of a doña, the blue eyes, the fair skin, the hair dark as roasted coffee, sweet to the smell as cinnamon bark, so enflaming, once, to the passions of thin-hipped, elegantly-shouldered men. Her hair had turned to yellowish-white, her skin was liver-spotted and folded in dewlaps over and under the arch of a fine chin, but the eyes were still blue, as blue as ever, although now she wore steel-rimmed spectacles, a humiliation she would have never endured in youth. She still maintained her hostility towards them, and hid them on the rare occasion someone came. She hid them now, in the secret pocket of her brocaded coat. The coat had come to San Francisco by China clipper in her mother's bridehood, but now the dainty pink cherry blossoms and moonlit bridges were smeared with dirt and age. The familiar sound of the bronze Basque herdbell summoned her—she had taken it from her father's house when she married, and she had brought it back again when her husband died. Her father and mother were already dead; her son was dead; her granddaughter, Theresa, was gone; she was alone.

At the servant's entrance, a young man waited. She peered at him through the lattice. He stood quietly, open faced and sandy haired, his great basket in hand, clad in a white coat. The white coat had earlier in the day been freshly starched; now it lay limp to his body. It had gotten stained with blood, and smelled of meat. He flinched, expectantly, when she opened the door.

Why are you late? My pets are hungry. Is the meat cut fine enough? No gristle, I told you last time, no gristle. And no bone! My birds can't eat bone, they choke. You killed my prettiest bluejay. Yes, you. He choked on a bone. I found him dead. You killed him. Go. Get out. I'll send a check to the butcher himself. I won't let *you* have my money. (She paused to prepare an insult.) You *trash.* (As he set down the basket and sauntered toward the garden gate, she flung a final epithet after him, adding a "God" to her "damn.") *OKIE trash!*

As soon as his back was to her, she reached out her glasses, her eyes followed the butcher's boy. He fumbled the latch on the gate, and a great-crested blueblack bird lunged at him, swept past his face, lunged again, fearless, furious, that the boy was empty handed. The boy ducked and fled to his white truck, leaving the gate ajar. The bird screamed after him, and all at once there was with the screaming bird a multitude of his screaming fellows. In the brief moment of the butcher boy's retreat, the garden had filled with birds. Down from the dark, piney Los Gatos hills they swarmed, demanding to be fed. There were jays in the pepper tree, jays in the sweetly poisonous oleanders, jays in the cypress, jays perched at all angles on the wall—a rampart ten feet high and just as thick between her and the rows of identical huts where the peasants squatted, with their gaudy Chevrolets and Oldsmobiles, their ugly television aerials, their horrid children and their horrid cats. The jays alighted on the iron spears that topped the wall, they balanced themselves on the jutting

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hunks of glass which had been embedded in the concrete to shred the hands and legs of intruders, to shield her sanctuary from destructive children and marauding cats.

SHE WENT INTO THE KITCHEN with the meat basket, and scrupulously divided the contents into thirds, against the weekend, because it was Friday, and there would be no more delivery until Monday. Within the dusty pantry was an old meat cooler; the rancid odor of decay flooded out, as she laid the new supply of meat on top of the shrivelled scraps of previous batches. Even in that dark interior, the sound of the birds penetrated, loud and demanding. She hurried back into the kitchen, picked up the day's ration, and went forth into the garden. With arms amazingly strong and steady, she heaved the meat scraps into a central plaza, which was flanked on one side by a shrine. The birds descended; they squealed; they fought. They tore at the greyish-pink scraps of meat with their powerful beaks, they ripped at the meat with their pointed claws. And the old blue eyes looked with delight on the bluejays eating.

She had withheld a few choice morsels, and now her favorites came to claim them. She held out an empty hand, and one of the birds lit on it, his claws firmly but tenderly dug into her liver-spotted flesh. With her free hand she cautiously but steadily advanced a bit of meat toward his waiting beak. He seized the chunk and shot into the sky, and the force of his beating pinions almost threw her down. She laughed. Soon the birds were satiated, and began to disperse. A few hangers-on, the weak and the slow, scratched wistfully for a time among the flower-beds, but eventually they, too, fluttered away to their roosting places.

Her blue eyes looked westward, attracted by something glowing. The sky above the Santa Cruz mountains had assumed the archangelic radiance of winter days, an hour or so before dusk. The light was playing through the broken clouds, far above the dark mountains, the light existed as pillars, and streamers, and shafts, the darkling clouds were transmuted into light. The light made her garden glow.

The back of the shrine of St. Francis was to the north, so that the front and side-wings would catch the ultimate of sunlight at whatever season, whatever time of day. St. Francis had been her father's pride; he always took guests there first, before the sherry, before the conversation. The mosaic decorations of the little shrine had been made by a young Mexican laborer, who had lost a hand in an accident, rendering him unfit for work in the vineyards. The priests at the mission had taught him to use his one good hand for the glory of God, and after he had filled the mission with more terra cottas of God's mother, more images and mosaic ikons of the saints than the grounds could hold, he began to receive calls, and go out to work for private parties. She remembered him dimly, but recollected that he had talked to her once, kindly, when she was a little girl. But later she had learned that he had no business sense, and was a tool of the priests. He had refused a commission to make a mural of the harvest of Bacchus for a wealthy vintner; he would depict only God's mother and the saints. Furthermore, he turned over to the priests all the money he made. And they in turn gave him a hut beside the poultry house to live in, and the added privilege of feeding corn to the hens. Her father had once asked this queer man why he did not keep the money for himself—he could be rich, he could go to the East, make a pilgrimage to Rome. He had replied in his simple-minded way, shaking his jet-black head of hair, blinking his brown peasant's eyes, and hiding his withered arm, that the money was not his but God's .

ST. FRANCIS stood in his brown frock, his angular bare feet firm among crocus and iris, one hand to his side and hidden, the other stretched firmly out, a bluebird nestled in his palm, a halo of green swallows and goldfinches about his head, a hummingbird next to his flecked beard. They were like burning in the gold light, the saint and the songbirds, but her blue eyes regarded them coldly. She went into the house; she had never liked the shrine, although she had to admit that it made the perfect place to feed her bluejays.

The stupid butcher boy had come late, and it was past tea time. She lugged the heavy kettle to the sink and filled it half full with water, then

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returned it to the stove. Children were playing, somewhere down the street, outside the perimeter of her sanctuary. She could hear their singsong voices as they taunted one another in their games. The kettle was making noise, but probably had not boiled yet. She took off the lid to make sure, and her glasses steamed; she wiped them off on her skirt, replaced them and looked outside, as if to test them. She winced.

A tomcat, attracted by the smell of meat and blood, was sniffing at the stained marble before St. Francis' shrine. She viewed the animal with loathing. He was alert and muscular, with thick-set legs and short, tight fur, striped in ruddy orange. The light outside had begun to fail, but she saw him clearly, and she knew what she must do. She hurried to a nearby closet and removed the double-barreled shotgun that had been her son's. She did not load it; it was already loaded; she kept it loaded at all times, for contingencies like this one. She opened the window; the cat had not moved. She took aim, her blue eyes steady ahead, her arms steady, too. She squeezed; squeezed again; the kick of the weapon threw her back against a cupboard, but she did not fall. The cat was still in the same place, but now he was dead. The arm of St. Francis appeared to stretch out over him in a ludicrous benediction. The sounds of the children had ceased. There was no traffic in the street. The neighborhood was calm.

With the light step of a young girl, she went into the garden. The enemy lay limp, teeth clenched, in a pool of blood and excrement. She picked him up with loathing, for he was still dripping, warm and damp, and flung him into the incinerator near the wall. She replaced the grill and wiped her hands on her skirt. She waited in the garden in a state of high excitement.

Through the new calm came the thin, wavering call of a little boy: "Here, Rufus, here, Rufus, kitty Rufe, kitty Rufe, kitty Rufe!"

Then silence. Then the voice again, thinner still, but nearer: "Here, Rufus, here, Rufus, kitty Rufe, kitty Rufe, kitty Rufe!"

Then silence.

And now, she went back into the house, but only to turn off the gas, and to pick up the flashlight which lay on a shelf on the verandah. She hid among the azaleas and waited. Her foot hurt; she had injured it when she fell against the cupboard. The silence was broken again.

"Here, Rufus, here, kitty. . . ."

The voice was closer.

She heard steps.

The gate creaked.

Dimly, through her old blue eyes, she perceived a dark form as it slid along the flagstones of the garden path. Her flashlight was ready, and just as the form reached the shrine, she switched on the light. A blond, blue-eyed boy, who was perhaps eight or nine years old, was transfixed by the sudden brightness. He hunched toward the shadows, his skin the color of light toast, finely freckled, his thighs quivering under his tight Levis. She glided toward him, the light preceding her. What do you want?

Frightened into politeness he gasped. "Please ma'am, I'm looking for Rufus, my cat. Have you seen him?"

You're a naughty boy. Cats eat birds. They are wicked animals.

Then the air turned. He had got his bearings. He grew defiant. "Ya, ya," he hissed. "Bluejay witch, bluejay witch! My dad says you're cracked!" The young blue eyes, lucid, transparent, mocking, looked up at her old blue eyes, but she stared back, she stared him down. He lost his courage, grew afraid again.

Get out. Your cat's not here. But if I see him, I'll kill him. Get out! Get out! The boy bounded toward the open gate and left it swinging after him. *Okie trash*, get out! The Okies had ruined California, they had ruined Theresa, they would ruin her if she couldn't keep them out. Flashlight in hand, she groped her way to the gate and securely bolted it. The stupid butcher's boy had left the gate open—no wonder the trash had gotten in. Her foot hurt badly now; she must have sprained her ankle. She paused to train the beam of light on St. Francis, and it gave her pleasure to see that the tiles were pocked by scattered shot from the gun; furthermore, the piece of greenish tile that had been St. Francis' eye had been knocked out. She chuckled. Then her bad foot slipped in the pool of blood and excrement that the cat had left, and the flashlight smashed on the marble and went out.

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When she opened her eyes, it was to the grey dimness of a high morning fog; she was aware of light, but not of sun. She could distinguish no objects. Gradually, she realized that she was in pain; from her right hip to her right ankle her leg throbbed, the rest of her was without feeling. The fog grew thinner; the brightness of the objective sun rounded itself at her; but she was cold. She was so terribly cold, she was sure that the cold must have made her numb. The sun began to warm her; but she was still numb. Her eyes still looked into chaos. Of course. Her spectacles were missing. She had dropped them in the fall. Perhaps she could locate them; she tried to twist her neck; the pain overcame her. But little by little she managed to turn, until the points of color that danced in the obscurity told her that she was facing the little shrine of St. Francis. She strained her eyes, strained hard, and she could detect a glimmer like sun bouncing off the steel rims of her glasses, somewhere beside her. If only she could reach them. Why not? Why was she lying here anyway? Why didn't she just get up? The butcher's boy would come. She would have him find them for her. The idea contented her, and she relaxed for a moment, gathering the strength to pull herself up. But she could not raise her body; she could not move. She tried wriggling her toes. She could wriggle the toes of her right foot, though it hurt her when she did. She could not feel the left, nor move it. She gradually perceived that her left arm was pinned under her back, and that she could not feel it, and that her right arm lay outstretched, in the direction of St. Francis, in the direction of the precious spectacles. She struggled hard, finally did manage to wriggle an inch closer, but her strength gave out, and the light left her.

The bluejays were angry. She could tell by their voices. How intimately she had known them, the lovely birds, the only things in the decadent, disintegrating country of California that were pure. The bluejays had never been angry with her, because she loved them, because she cared for them, tended their needs, defended them from predatory cats. She heard the bluejays, although she could not see them, and she knew that her friends were there. They were there to celebrate the picture she had painted, their lovely portrait. In those days she had gone to Mass every Sunday, and holy days, too, and remembered the saints. Her teacher was horrified that a young girl should want to abandon still life—she remembered the broken pitcher, the rotting fruit, "such lovely shapes" he had said in his fake French voice—her teacher was horrified that she wanted to paint saints, but she had her way. Her St. Francis did not look stupid with a bunch of songbirds like he did in their garden; he was virile and racy with part of his strong breast showing, and he held no bluebird but a beautiful bluejay in his outstretched hand. "It's indecent!" her father said, and the painting teacher was dismissed. Why, father? Why . . . ? Why . . . ?

The bluejays were angry. Why should the jays be angry, when she loved them so? They were angry with the Okies; with the Okies' children; with the Okies' disgusting tomcats; with their young men. Theresa was in tears, and she in rage. Of course I read the letter, you idiot. I've always read your mail for your own good. "You had no right." The blood of the Sepulcro and Cristocruce flows in my veins—in yours, too, more's the pity—and you take up with an Okie, under my very eyes. My own granddaughter. "He isn't an Okie. He's from Wyoming. And what if he were an Okie? What difference would that make?" He's trash! Do you hear me, *trash! Okie trash!* "He goes to Stanford; he has a scholarship." Okie trash. And you're Mexican trash. Your mother ruined you, as she killed my son. "That's not true, grandmother. She loved him. She loved me, and she loved you, too, even though you wouldn't let her." Get out of this house, you Mexican whore, you daughter of a Mexican whore. Go squat in a hut with the peasants and have your bastard. Get out of my house! Puta. Doors slammed. Puta. . . .

The bluejays were angry. And they grew angrier, as the afternoon progressed. She marked the progression of the afternoon by the sun, which had sunk down so low in the west that the wall and the shrubbery completely shaded her, and she was cold. The pain was strange, it came and went, and though sometimes it might be hot, she was always cold. She shivered and was wet. The pungent odor of her own excrement

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came up around her, nor did it offend her, because it was her own. The odor excited the birds, who were hungry for the scraps of meat that she fed them daily. They had grown voluptuous under her tender and loving care; they did not wish to seek elsewhere for their carrion. They demanded to be fed.

The bluejays swept toward her, they glanced off her, they gathered in blueblack clouds above her, they shrieked, they hollered. The butcher's boy had not come with their daily supply of meat. Why? In a clearer moment, she comprehended all. Yesterday had been Friday and today was Saturday and tomorrow would be Sunday and not until Monday afternoon would the butcher's boy come. Not until then would he find her. But surely, someone would come before that. Theresa? Even she had to laugh. The Mexican slut had been gone—was it eleven, no, twelve years—and probably was squatting like a doe in a rabbit hutch, bringing forth squealing blond blue-eyed children, images of that disgusting man. Perhaps the neighbors would worry and come in. Worry? They would be glad if she died. Ever since they had tried—and failed—to have her declared a public nuisance in court, what could they do? The country of California has fallen on evil days, when a Cristocruce can be hauled into court by Okies. Perhaps the boy would come back to look for his cat. She thought not. She was sure that she had frightened him away for good. A blur of wings whipped over her failing eyes. Perhaps a priest would come. Ha! She had told the priests off years ago. And besides, on Saturday night, they would be hearing confessions.

The bluejays had given up in disgust, and had flown to their roosts.

The pillars of light had dissolved in the western sky. Her eyes could collect no more light.

Bless me, father, for I have sinned.

"Venial or mortal?"

Mortal.

"How, my child?"

I let a man have his way with me.

"A young man?"

Yes.

"Does he love you?"

Yes.

"Will he marry you?"

Yes.

The penance the priest had given her had been light, a few verses she could not remember now, but the words of advice he had given her came back to her. "Remember, my child, that flesh is flesh and that spirit is spirit, and that the sins of the flesh are easy to detect and easy to confess because they are outward and visible, but the sins of the spirit are inward and invisible, and they are not easy to confess, because they are not easy to know. Examine yourself carefully; are there no more sins to confess?"

None, father.

Her reply was quick and firm. Some matters are personal. Why should she tell the priest that she had prayed to St. Francis, hoping that she would get pregnant, so she could force the young man to marry her? Didn't all young girls do the same? What is love, anyway? She loved him well enough in her way. She loved the idea of his being her husband, and she the wife of a Cristocruce, the blood of the Sepulcro and the Cristocruce united at last. How proud she was when she married him. For fifty years she had carried the words of the priest in her heart, and she had never understood them. Not even now.

Something slimy crawled over her forehead; had she not been benumbed and immovable, she would have flinched. It explored the arch of her brow, crept down between the eyes, and entered a nostril. For the first time since she had lain there, her whole body tingled, felt alive. She sneezed. Whatever the creature had been, it had got dislodged. She felt it no more. She felt nothing for a long time.

WHEN SHE OPENED HER EYES to another morning, she could not even discern the fog; but she knew it was morning, because the bells were ringing to summon the faithful to Mass. Cars drove by in the streets outside, and children ran down the sidewalk, heelplates clattering. She had given up the idea of trying to reach her glasses. She had tried and tried but she could not get near them. She had given up the idea of being discovered by someone else. She would just have to wait for the butcher's boy. She was resigned to wait. A

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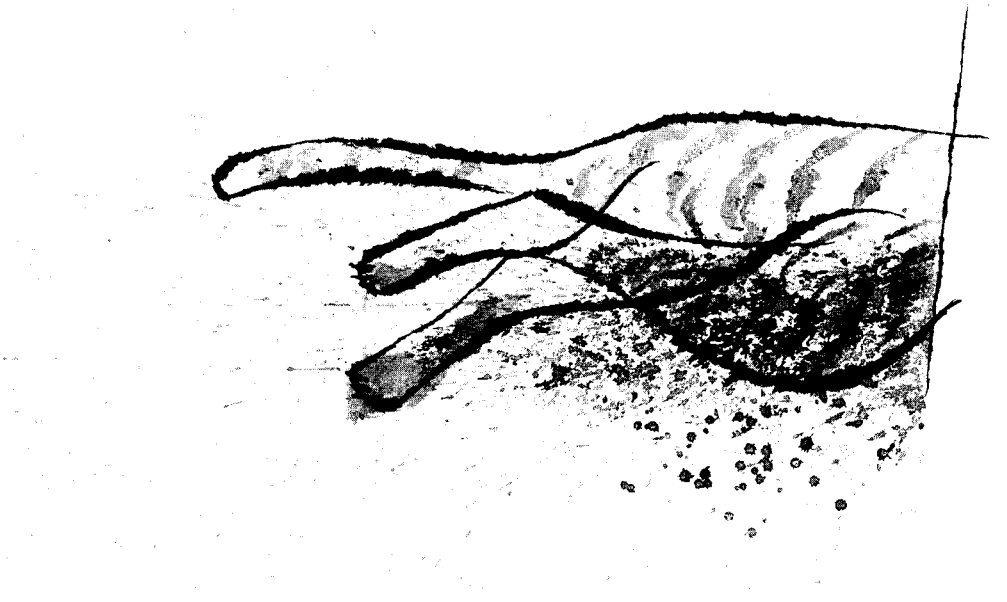
lady had fallen on evil days, who had to wait for the charity of an Okie to be saved. . . . The birds returned. . . . The birds would save her. Had she not given them much? Would they not give her much in return? She had cast her bread upon the waters; she had thrown her meat into the shrine of St. Francis. She had shot their enemy, the cat. The bluejays hovered in the trees, and she thought on the Holy Ghost and the birdlike nature of it. But the Holy Ghost had descended like a dove. A pigeon. A stupid dirty pigeon. How much more holy, how much more ghostly, if it were bluejays instead. The jays flocked over her, and their wings fanned her fevered face.

Hour after hour, the bells sounded hour by hour. Each time they grew louder, lasted longer, as noon approached. She had lost count, but she heard the bells sound long this time, and she knew it was noon. The honey-like fragrance from the heavenly blue flowers of the Santa Barbara ceanothus was gently carried to her nostrils by the upspringing breeze, and she took it for incense, she was the center of her own worship, the blind St. Francis would be her priest, the congregation squawked approval from the trees. It was her confirmation, and she had pranced and minced before the mirror, touching the new swellings beneath the tatted bodice, as she had felt the ethereal stuff of her white skirt and reveled in it, her aunt had said: "Barbara, you are proud; you are too proud. This is God's hour, not yours. The Holy Ghost will not descend if you are proud." But as if to contradict her aunt, she had felt a tremendous glow at the moment when the Bishop laid his hands on her head, and she knew that her aunt was wrong. As the priest had been wrong later. As all the stupid religionists had been wrong from the start. . . .

From time to time her eyes caught glimmers of things. She fancied she saw the neighbor boy, peering through the bars at the top of the gate, but she could not be sure. She could scarcely have seen that far, even with the aid of her spectacles, and she did not have them and she could not reach them. But the image remained, the small mouth sneering, the blue eyes staring. . . . The bluejays were angry. . . .

The bluejays were indeed angry. They had gone a whole day and part of another without being fed. They boomed through the air like gigantic bees in search of an elusive honey; they came closer to her; some perched at her thighs where the rich smells were. One of the bluejays alighted on her forehead, and embedded his claws in the thin flesh. Thin and wrinkled though it was, beneath the flesh was blood. The blood began to flow, first a trickle, then a rush—it flooded the cavities where the blind eyes stared. The pain was nigh unbearable, but she bore it, as she had borne all the past affronts to her sensibility that an evil environment in a decaying country had conspired to produce. A strong beak was plunged into the pool that once was blue. And even then, she steadfastly refused to cry.



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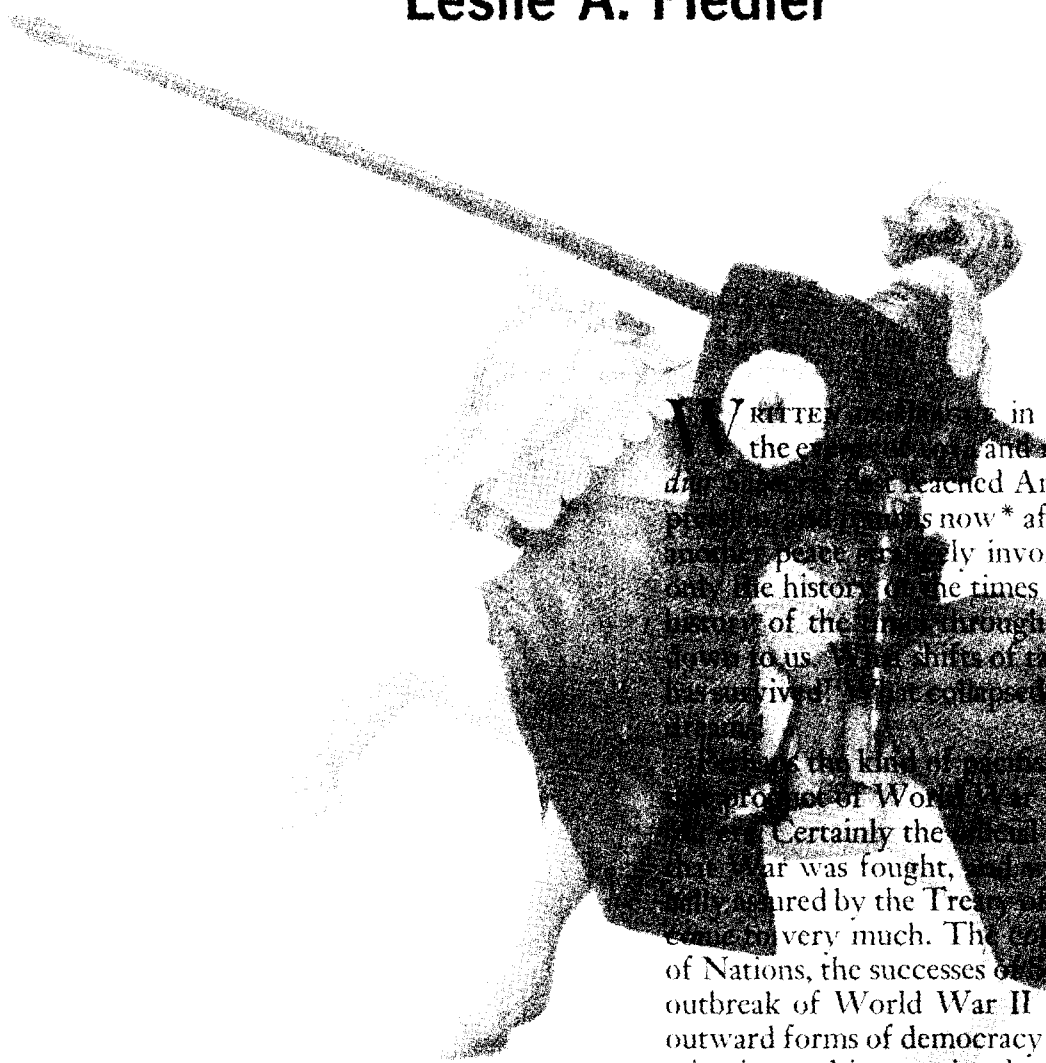
The Anti-War Novel and the Good Soldier Schweik

Leslie A. Fiedler



WRITTEN [illegible] in the 'twenties about the e[illegible] and 1915, *The Good Soldier* [illegible] reached America with the De[illegible]s now* after another war and another peace, [illegible]ly involved in history: not only the history of the times it describes, but the history of the [illegible] through which it has come down to us. [illegible] shifts of taste and allegiance it has survived. [illegible] collapsed hopes and betrayed [illegible].

[illegible] the kind of partisan embodies is the [illegible] of World War I [illegible] lasted into [illegible]. Certainly the [illegible] whose name that war was fought, [illegible] were theoretically assured by the Treaty of [illegible], have not [illegible] very much. The [illegible] the League of Nations, the successes of [illegible] Hitler, the outbreak of World War II made clear that the outward forms of democracy, national self-determination and international cooperation, imposed by fiat or invoked in piety, had little to do with the inward meaning of the world after 1919. Not peace and order but terror and instability were the heritage of the postwar years: an institutionalized terror and a stabilized instability, in whose honor two minutes of silence were observed for

*A paper-back edition is to be printed by The New American Library early in 1963.

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the score of November elevenths between the first great Armistice and the second great war.

But pacifism, too, was a victim of World War II, which saw thousands of young men, who earlier had risen in schools and colleges to swear that they would never bear arms, march off to battle—as often as not with copies of anti-war books in their packs. Those books were real enough, like the passion that prompted them and the zeal with which they were read; only the promises were illusory. The unofficial war-resisters, who for twenty years had pored over evocations of battlefield atrocities to immunize themselves against the appeals of patriotism, found their own slogans finally as irrelevant as the catch phrases they pretended to despise. To be sure, the end of still another war has seen the upsurge of still another pacifism; but this seems by now part of a familiar pattern, the zig which implies a zag before and after.

Perhaps then, one must content himself with saying more moderately that the chief lasting accomplishment of World War I was the invention of the Anti-War Novel: a fictional record of the mood out of which the pacifism of between-the-wars was born, and of the hopes and fears which sustained it through all the horrors of peace. It is certainly true that before the 1920's that *genre* did not exist, thought it had been prophesied in the first two-thirds of Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage;* and that since the 1920's, it has become a standard form: both a standard way of responding to combat experience and a standard way of starting a literary career.

In the United States, the examples of Hemingway and Faulkner have insured the continuing popularity of *genre;* the latter struggling as early as *Soldier's Pay* and as late as *A Fable* to give shape to his sense of World War I, and the former providing a classic prototype once and for all in *A Farewell to Arms*. No wonder similar books from abroad have always moved us, from Henri Barbusse's *Le Feu* to *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and notably, of course, *The Good Soldier Schweik*. And no wonder, too, that the generation of Americans who had broken their pacifist oaths in World War II sought to make amends by keeping faith with the sort of novel that had made war real to them before life itself had gotten around to doing it.

Certainly the flood of anti-war novels that generation has been producing since the '40's owes more to certain books which their authors had grown up reading than to the actual fighting which many of them did. A typical case in point is Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, begun at Harvard before Mailer had lived through any battles but fictional ones; and quite properly so, since for those of his age *the meanings of their wars had already been established by men twenty and thirty years their senior*, by Hemingway and Faulkner and Jaroslav Hasek among others.

As a matter of fact, the meaning of their wars has been for most generations established before the fact—in our culture, largely by works of art. The writers of Europe and America who were young enough to fight in World War I were, in this light, unique, endowed with a peculiar freedom which their successors have vainly tried to emulate by imitating the forms in which it was expressed. Only the former, however, actually lived in the interval between two conventional ways of understanding war, serving as the gravediggers to one, and the midwives to the other.

For a thousand years or so, roughly from the time of Charlemagne to 1914, the wars of Christendom, whether fought against external enemies or strictly within the family, had been felt and celebrated in terms of a single continuous tradition. And those who lived within that tradition assumed without question that some battles at least were not only justifiable but holy, as they assumed that to die in such battles was not merely a tolerable fate but the most glorious of events. Doubts they may have had but these could scarcely be confessed to themselves, much less publicly flaunted.

Full of internal contradictions (what, after all, had any military code to do with the teachings of Christ?) and pieced together out of the ragbag of history (tales of Old Testament berserkers like Samson, scholarly recollections of Roman *vertu* and Greek *areté*, popular vestiges of the Germanic combat-religion), nonetheless the Christian

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heroic tradition proved viable for ten centuries, as viable in the high verse of Dante and Shakespeare and Chaucer as in folk ballads and the sermons of country priests. Yet all the while it lived, of course, it was dying, too, dying with the civilization that had nurtured it, already mourned for by the time of Sir Walter Scott. So slowly did it die, however, that only under the impact of total war were those who fought shocked into admitting that perhaps they no longer believed in what they fought for.

Last to learn that the old tradition had in fact died were the Heads of State, Kings and Emperors, Prime Ministers and Presidents. In their mouths, the shabby slogans: *For God and Country*, *For Christ and King*, *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* rang ever less convincingly; but they were not the simple hypocrites their earliest critics took them for—merely dupes of history, in whom self-interest cooperated with confusion. Even more absurd than they, however, seemed the prelates of Churches, in whose mouths the more bloody battle cries, always a little ironical, appeared suddenly nothing but ironical. Yet it was not the believers who felt the absurdity, only those for whom God was presumably dead.

Small wonder, then, that priest and potentate alike remained unaware that history had rendered them comic; since no one told them except those whose opinions they discounted in advance. Indeed, some to this very day have not realized that the words they speak in all solemnity have been to many for over forty years household jokes. One function of totalitarianism in its manifold forms is precisely to forestall the moment of awakening, imposing by decree the heroic concepts which one flourished by consent. The totalitarian Chief counterfeits ever more grotesque versions of the Hero, and in cell and torture chamber attempts to exact from those who dare laugh at him "confessions" that nothing is funny at all. The earliest record of such an attempt, as well as of its gloriously comic failure, is to be found in *The Good Soldier Schweik*.

Not only in totalitarian societies, however, is the anti-heroic spirit assailed by the guardians of the pseudo-heroic. In more democratic nations, mass culture is entrusted with the job assigned elsewhere to the secret police; and where those who snicker at pretension are not haled off to prison, they find it difficult to make themselves heard above the immensely serious clatter of the press and the ponderous voices of official spokesmen, magnified to thunder by P.A. systems. Yet certain writers, like Hasek, continue to feel obliged to carry to the world the comic-pathetic news it is reluctant to hear: the Hero is dead. First to know, such writers are the last to forget that ever since World War I they have been called on to celebrate, with due hilarity, the death of the myth of the heroic, even as their predecessors were called on solemnly to celebrate its life.

IN THE BATTLEFRONT against war, however, there is these days no more possibility of final victory or defeat than on the battlefronts of war itself. In the former as in the latter the end is stalemate; for the anti-heroic satirists who have carried the day in the libraries and the literary magazines, elsewhere seem to have made little impression. The notion of the Christian Hero is no longer viable for the creative imagination, having been destroyed once and for all by the literature of disenchantment which followed World War I; so that no modern Shakespeare could conceive of presenting warriors and kings in the light shed on them by the Chronicle Plays, nor can we imagine a contemporary Vergil suggesting that death for the fatherland is sweet. Yet we fight wars still, ever vaster and more efficient war, while Senators and Commissars alike speak, and are applauded for speaking, in all seriousness the very lines given caricatured Senators and Commissars in satirical anti-war novels.

Worse still, the anti-heroic revolt has itself become in two or three generations a new convention, the source of a new set of fashionably ridiculous clichés. Shameless politicians are as likely to use the slogans of between-the-wars pacifism to launch new wars as they are to refurbish more ancient platitudes. The wild freedom with which the authors of *The Enormous Room* and *Le Feu*, *The Good Soldier Schweik* and *A Farewell to Arms* challenged millenial orthodoxies has been sadly tamed; and is symbolized by Picasso's domesticated dove, hovering obediently over the

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rattling spears of the Soviet War Camp. Nevertheless, such books tell us still certain truths about the world in which we live, reveal to us certain ways in which the human psyche, men's consciousness of themselves in peace and war was radically altered some four decades ago.

The anti-war novel did not end war but it memorializes the end of something almost as deeply rooted in the culture of the West: the concept of Honor. It comes into existence at the moment when in the West men, still nominally Christian, come to believe *that the worst thing of all is to die;* more exactly, perhaps, the moment when for the first time in a thousand years it is possible to *admit* that no cause is worth dying for. There are various mitigated forms of this new article of faith: that no cause is worth the death of all humanity, or of a whole nation, or simply of millions of lives; but inevitably it approaches the formulation: no cause is worth the death of a man, no cause is worth the death of *me!*

THERE ARE IN THE TRADITIONAL literatures of Europe, to be sure, characters who have believed that death was the worst event, and honor a figment; but such characters have always belonged to "low comedy," i.e., they have been comic butts set against representatives of quite other ideals, Sancho Panzas who serve Don Quixote's, Falstaffs who tremble before Prince Hal, Leperellos who cower as the Don Giovanni's tempt fate. They have been permitted to blaspheme against the courtly codes, precisely because those codes have been so secure. And, in any event, their cowardice has always spoken in prose or dialect, worn the garb of a servant or vassal, bowed the knee before an unchallenged master. They represented not a satirical challenge, but precisely a "comic relief" from the strain of upholding against the promptings of our animal nature, the demands of indolence, and greed and fear, these high values which were once thought to make men fully human. *Fatti non foste a viver come bruti, ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza.*

What happens, however, when the Leperellos, the Falstaffs and the Sancho Panzas begin to inherit the earth? When the remaining masters are in fact more egregious Falstaffs and Leperellos and Sancho Panzas, and all which Don Quixote and Prince Hal and Don Giovanni once stood for is discredited or dead? What happens in a time of democracy, mass culture and mechanization, a time when war itself is transformed by the industrial revolution? *The Good Soldier Schweik* addresses itself to answering, precisely and hilariously, this question. And the answer is: what happens is what has been happening to us all ever since 1914.

We inhabit for the first time a world in which men begin wars knowing their avowed ends will not be accomplished, a world in which it is more and more difficult to believe that the conflicts we cannot avert are in any sense justified. And in such a world, the draft-dodger, the malingerer, the goldbrick, the crap-out, all who make what Hemingway was the first to call "a separate peace," all who somehow *survive* the bombardment of shells and cant, become a new kind of anti-heroic hero. Of such men, Schweik is the ultimate ancestor. "A great epoch calls for great men," Hasek tells us in a prefatory note. "Today, in the streets of Prague, you can come across a man who himself does not realize what his significance is in the history of the great new epoch. . . . If you were to ask him his name, he would answer . . . 'I am Schweik.' . . . He did not set fire to the temple of the goddess at Ephesus, like that fool of a Herostrate, merely in order to get his name into the . . . school reading books. And that, in itself, is enough."

II

NOT ALL OF Hasek's book, unfortunately, is devoted to portraying a Falstaff in a world without Hotspurs or Prince Hals. Much of it is spent in editorializing rather obviously about the horrors of war and the ironies of being a chaplain, the shortcomings of the Emperor Franz Joseph and the limitations of the military mind; and toward the end it becomes rather too literary in a heavy-handed way, especially after the introduction of Volunteer Officer Marek, a figure obviously intended to speak directly for the author. From time to time, we feel it as dated, say, as *What Price Glory?* or *All Quiet on the Western Front;* for we have grown by now as weary of the phrase-

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mongering and self-pity of conventional pacifism as of attitudinizing and pharisaism of conventional patriotism.

It is not Hasek's anti-clericalism or anti-semitism, not his distrust of Magyars or of the long-defunct Austrian Empire, not his Czech nationalism or his defense of the Czech tongue against German linguistic imperialism which moves us in 1962. The dream of expropriation, too ("After this war, they say, there ain't going to be any more emperors and they'll help themselves to the big royal estates."), rings hollow for us now, who know how it turned into the nightmare from which Jan Masaryk leaped to his death two wars later.

It is only when Hasek turns Schweik loose among scoundrels quite like himself, the police spy Bretschneider or the atheist Jewish Chaplain, Otto Katz, and permits him to speak his own language; only, that is to say, when the anarchist intellectual permits himself to be possessed by his *lumpen* anti-hero that the book becomes at once wonderfully funny and wonderfully true. Schweik is fortunately one of those mythical creations who escape the prejudices of their creators even as he eludes our definitions; and he refuses to speak with the voice of the 1921 revolutionary even as he refuses to speak with the voice of Councilors and Kings.

He will not be exploited by his author anymore than he will by the con-men and bullies who inhabit his fictional universe; moving through a society of victimizers, he refuses to become a victim. And though Hasek would persuade us that he is surrounded by Pilates ("The glorious history of the Roman domination of Jerusalem was being enacted all over again"), Schweik certainly does not consider himself a Christ. He is neither innocent nor a claimant to innocence. Charged with political crimes by an absurd police spy, he pleads guilty; and to a fellow prisoner who cries, "I'm innocent, I'm innocent," remarks blandly, "So was Jesus Christ but they crucified him for all that. Nobody anywhere at any time has ever cared a damn whether a man's innocent or not."

To Schweik malice is simply one of the facts of life, the inexhaustible evil of man a datum from which all speculation about survival must begin. He neither looks back to a Golden Age nor forward to redemption, secular or heavenly; but knows that if he is to survive it must be in a world quite like the one he has always known. A communicant of no church and a member of no party, he considers that neither intelligence nor charity are likely to ameliorate man's condition. "Anybody can make a mistake," he says at one point, "and the more he thinks about a thing, the more mistakes he's bound to make." And at another, he remarks with a straight-faced nihilism before which we can seek refuge only in laughter, "If all people wanted to do all the others a good turn, they'd be walloping each other in a brace of shakes."

Return evil for evil, is Schweik's anti-Golden Rule; though often he assumes the guise of non-resistance, along with the semblance of idiocy, to do it. He is, however, neither a pharisee nor a hypocrite, only a simple conniver: in civil life, a peddler of dogs with forged pedigrees; in war, a soldier who will not fight. His resistance to war is based on no higher principles than his business; both are rooted in the conviction that a man must somehow *live* and, if possible, thrive on the very disasters which surround him. In the end, he is a kind of success, as success goes in a society intent on committing suicide; he eats well, drinks well, sleeps with the mistress of one of his masters, and pummels another master mercilessly. But above all, he does not die. What more can a man ask?

He is even promoted from a lowly batman to Company Orderly, though, of course, the one place he will not go to is the Front. No matter how hard history nudges him, no matter what his orders read, nothing will force him into battle. He marches resolutely backwards or in circles, but never forward into the sound of shooting; and by the novel's end, he has managed blessedly to be taken prisoner by his own side. Refusing to recognize the reality of disaster, he turns each apparent defeat into a victory, proving himself in the end no more a *schlemiel* than a Victim or one of those Little Men so beloved in sentimental protest literature. Yet he seems sometimes all three, for it pleases his native slyness to assume such

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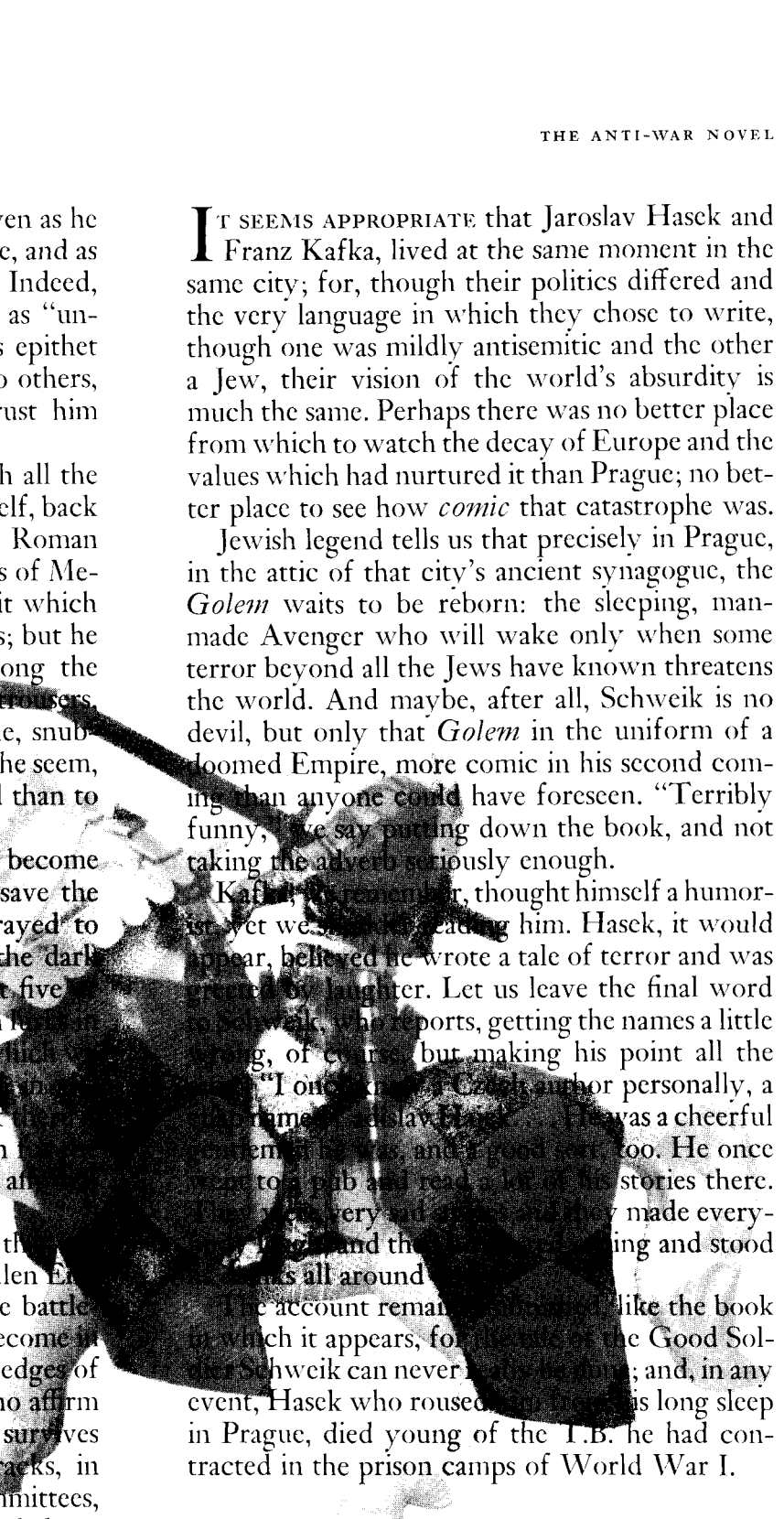
roles as disguises, fooling us as readers, even as he fools his superiors in the fiction they share, and as we suspect he fools the author himself. Indeed, Schweik is fond of speaking of himself as "unlucky," but when he explains what this epithet means, it turns out he is unlucky only to others, especially those unwise enough to intrust him with important commissions.

Schweik's affiliation runs back through all the liars of literature to the father of lies himself, back through Falstaff to the sly parasites of Roman Comedy and the Vices, those demi-devils of Medieval Literature. He is, in fact, the spirit which denies as well as the spirit which deceives; but he plays his part without melodrama, among the clowns, his little finger on the seam of his trousers, and his chin tucked in. So plump, affable, snub-nosed and idiotically eager to please does he seem, that we are more inclined to pat his head than to cry, "Get thee behind me!"

Yet on his lips the noblest slogans become mockeries. Let him merely cry, "God save the Emperor!" and all who listen are betrayed to laughter; for he speaks in the name of the dark margin of the ambivalence in us all—that five or ten per cent of distrust and ridicule which lurks in our hearts in regard even to the cause to which we are most passionately committed. And in the world in which Hasek imagines Schweik there is none to gainsay him, since the spokesmen for ninety or ninety-five per cent of ordinary affirmation are corrupted or drunken or dumb.

We cannot help knowing, moreover, that [illegible] only the slogans of a distant war and a fallen Empire, but those most dear to us now: the battle cries of democracy or socialism, would become in that same mouth equally hilarious, our pledges of allegiance intolerable jokes even to us who affirm them. Surely Schweik is not yet dead, but survives in concentration camp and Army barracks, in prison cells and before Investigating Committees, assuring his interrogators of his feeble-mindedness and his goodwill as their pretences to virtue and prudence crumble before his garrulous irrelevancies. "Beg to report, sir," he says looking us right in the eye, "I'm an idiot, sir." And the idiocy of our definitions of sanity become immediately apparent.



It seems appropriate that Jaroslav Hasek and Franz Kafka, lived at the same moment in the same city; for, though their politics differed and the very language in which they chose to write, though one was mildly antisemitic and the other a Jew, their vision of the world's absurdity is much the same. Perhaps there was no better place from which to watch the decay of Europe and the values which had nurtured it than Prague; no better place to see how *comic* that catastrophe was.

Jewish legend tells us that precisely in Prague, in the attic of that city's ancient synagogue, the *Golem* waits to be reborn: the sleeping, man-made Avenger who will wake only when some terror beyond all the Jews have known threatens the world. And maybe, after all, Schweik is no devil, but only that *Golem* in the uniform of a doomed Empire, more comic in his second coming than anyone could have foreseen. "Terribly funny," we say putting down the book, and not taking the adverb seriously enough.

Kafka, [illegible] remember, thought himself a humorist yet we [illegible] reading him. Hasek, it would appear, believed he wrote a tale of terror and was greeted by laughter. Let us leave the final word to Schweik, who reports, getting the names a little wrong, of course, but making his point all the [illegible] "I once knew a Czech author personally, a chap named [illegible] Hasek. He was a cheerful gentleman he was, and a good sort, too. He once went to a pub and read a lot of his stories there. [illegible] very sad [illegible] made everybody laugh and the [illegible] ing and stood drinks all around."

The account remains unfinished, like the book in which it appears, for the tale of the Good Soldier Schweik can never be finished; and, in any event, Hasek who roused [illegible] long sleep in Prague, died young of the T.B. he had contracted in the prison camps of World War I.

Leslie A. Fiedler *is the most controversial postwar literary critic. His penetrating essays on culture and politics are collected in* An End To Innocence *(1955) and* No! In Thunder *(1961). His long "study in depth" of American fiction,* Love And Death In The American Novel *(1960), is one of the few significant books on the subject. Dr. Fiedler is Professor of English at Montana State University.*

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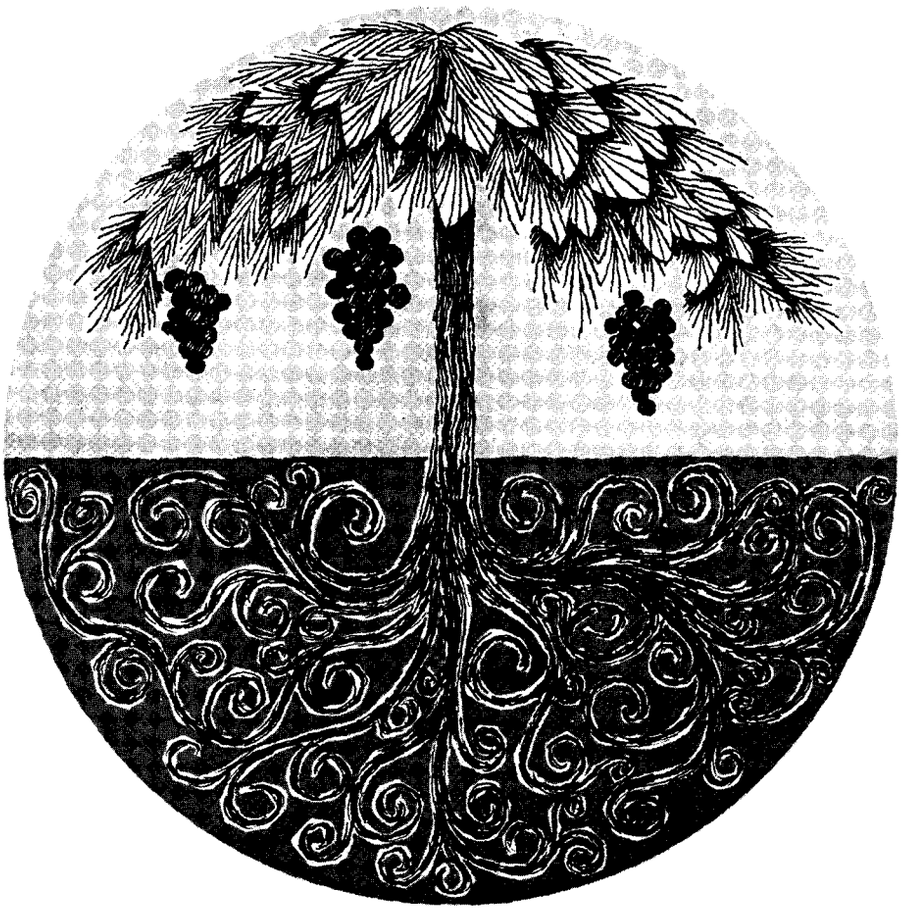

The Farrells of Sea Vineyard

by Harry Stiehl

THE FARRELLS *are an Irish Catholic family originally from Georgia, where, before the War Between The States, they had a coastal cotton plantation called* Sea Vineyard, *after their famous scuppernong vines. Fallen on evil days during Reconstruction, they lost* Sea Vineyard, *but, refurbishing the family fortunes in California (where they established a second estate called* Sea Vineyard), *they were able, in the latter years of the last century, to buy back the old Georgia* Sea Vineyard. *There are family graveyards at both* Sea Vineyards, *filled with "forgotten Farrells." CAROLINE FARRELL (1842-1927), the matriarch of the clan, has a son, MICHAEL FARRELL (1882-1947), who has become sole owner of the California* Sea Vineyard. *Michael and his wife, SHEILA FARRELL (1897—), are the parents of the twins, KATHERINE FARRELL (1918—) and KEVIN FARRELL (1918-1945). Kevin was married to his cousin, ANNE FARRELL (1920—), who, like Sheila, grew up in Georgia near the old* Sea Vineyard. *In this connected narrative, we see these six Farrells over the space of fifty years (1900-1950) on their two* Sea Vineyards *and in Europe during the two World Wars. The poem opens and closes with memories of the War Between The States near the first* Sea Vineyard; *through the poem runs a kind of "sunset-leitmotif," as we see the Farrell family darkening from "war to war to war."*

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I: CAROLINE FARRELL

Sea Vineyard, Georgia; 1900

TREMBLING and burning, how the sea of vines
Dances away in terraced, emerald lines
To summer. Black grapes hang in clusters, hot
And dusty, swelling on the vine. I swat
At blue-flies, idly, till they rise in clouds,
Whirling away adroitly. Velvet shrouds,
The drapes, blow through the window at my back.
A stormy orange sunset, stained with black,
Imposes its dominion on a sky
Empty at noon of colour. Will he die,
My brother, gravely, grieving for a ghost,
Broken in memory, and the girl long lost?
A night bird cries from the magnolia. There,
Summers ago, she stood, her wine-pale hair
Caught in a filmy fillet like a mist,
Her fragrant flesh, her pert mouth still unkissed
(Pale-Rider waiting to devour that mouth),
Singing a sad old ballad of the South,
High-pitched and wistful, an enchanted child—
Susan!—dancing mischievous and wild
On sandals pale and fine as French champagne . . .
Or staring pensively at autumn rain
Staining the great gray Angels of our dead.
We called her half an angel, though she led
Our young men on a merry chase. They danced
Attendance on her, fought for favours, pranced
Absurd as stallions round her while her gay
Infectious laughter bubbled half the day,
Her fingers plucking at her ribboned hair
As if at harp-strings. Cobwebs on the stair
Blow in the fraillest wind like fretted lace . . .
The French piazza, that has known her grace,
The quick, impetuous movements of her hand,
Is sinking deeper yearly in the sand;
And from its paintless ruin, one can brood
Upon a field stained with a young man's blood
One April morning, following a night
Of passion and disgrace. Her cheeks were white
As parchment, and her tongue, still thick with wine,
Stammered her wild entreaty: "Caroline!

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Someone must stop them—they will kill each other!"
The stain of dawn was spreading. I heard Mother
Clatter her teacup, sleepily, in bed
Above us. Loud enough to wake the dead,
Two shots resounded from the misty meadow.
She reeled as if she took them. In the shadow,
Her face was graying like the ashes, cold
As Winter. In that moment, she grew old . . .
I shook her. "Susan—who, who, where?"
Then she was sobbing, and her loosened hair
(Strange how the flame of memory flickers, smoulders!)
Flowed like a sea upon her shaking shoulders.
I drew the heavy drapes. My brother stood
Down in the courtyard, staring at the blood-
Stained body that the niggers carried back:
Burton, his closest friend, whose eyes were black
And merry—Burton now an almost-ghost.
Shivering with fear in my peignoir, I tossed
A lap-robe round me. Clattering down the stair,
I called my brother. He was bending there
Above the body, cursing at his pride—
And we heard Burton whisper as he died,
"She wasn't worth it." In my brother's eyes
That jackal, Horror, was feeding on its prize.
Turning, I saw her stiffen. She had heard.
Then—life proceeded. But the bitter word
Glittered between them, cold as naked steel.
Abandoned to a madness, raving, real,
She sickened in the summer, while the green
Light bathed her eerie forehead, and the spleen
Of sorrow and disfigured vanity
Flooded her tired body like a sea. . . .
I stood above her, fanning off the flies
That circled for the sorrow of her eyes,
And heard the endless petulant tirade
That tumbled from her tongue. I was afraid
For the condition of her soul. She died
Before the puffing priest could reach her side.
"Hold me!" she cried, sliding upon a hiss
Backward into the shadowy Abyss
Of His appalling mercy. As she fell,
In her great haste, to Heaven or to Hell,

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She dropped the mirror that had served her well:
Her mother's mirror. And I hold it now
Between my thumb and fingers while my brow
Blazes with sun within its silver lake.
She is not there, she is not there . . . I shake
Her mirror till it glitters in the bull
Bright sunset. Susan! I hear Brother pull
His bell impatiently—and I must trot
In answer to it. As I pass the squat
Statue of Dido on the stair, I hear
Him beat the bell again, again. My ear
Is ringing, ringing, ringing. Susan looms
Out of a sudden portrait, but these rooms
Wait vainly for her temperamental stride
And stormy laughter. Susan, when you died,
In your insinuous and wicked beauty,
I wept for you, of course: it was my duty.
But all my blood was bubbling from its well
Of joy——
Brother, Brother, pull your bell!
Susan will never hear you in her hell.

II: SGT. MICHAEL FARRELL

Paris; 1918

The Seine at sunset was a mass of red:
A shifting opalescence where the dead
Soldiers a moment lingered in a dream . . .
But now, at midnight, it's a murky stream
Looped by the bridges. And the great sad bell
Of Paris rings dead friends a fare-thee-well:
The *Ave-atque-Vale* that we kept
Back, fearing all emotion . . . But I wept
Out of control in a corner when the news
Broke on the world with whistles. "What's the use?"
We used to ask each other in the gray
Trenches that served some as their graves. The day
Broke always lonely over No Man's Land.
I'd edge the icy rifle in my hand
And sit up, hopeless. Still, the Germans came
Like hell hounds loping through Wagnerian flame:
An army of lovers, rings of serried steel,
Turning the spokes of Fortune's turning wheel.

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Ferried by Charon through the endless dead,
I recognized them all. In my hospital bed,
Even with morphia, I faced the foe . . .
Armistice whistles and confetti go,
Vanishing quickly, down a swirling drain,
But to erase the violence from the brain
Is not so easy. Something permanent
Still seems to linger, like the after-scent
Of week-old corpses in the pools of mud.
Sheila, I breathed the perfume of your blood
In my imagination, sex-denied,
Cold midnights in the trench, where side by side
I'd hug with a friend together. But it meant
Nothing to me, that stale experiment:
Neuter encounter in the sterile field.
Some, warped beyond a chance of being healed,
Turned down a twisted path. I cut them dead:
They made me, like most normal men, see red.
If I had a son like that, I swear I'd kill
Him and whoever hooked him on that thrill.
I walk through Paris, staring at the sky.
Life is a dream, somebody said, but I
No longer know what any of it means.
Luxembourg Gardens: and the dead stained queens,
In mournful resignation to their fate,
Brood from their stone like lions at the gate
Into Jerusalem, the desolate city.
Only the statues here can manage pity.
But over Paris still a broken bell
Tolls down the midnight avenues of Hell.
The dispossessed and restless search for some
Drug to relieve them, some delirium
Of alcohol and sex, the great relievers.
Lost in illusion here, we take new lovers
Only to founder in the same black bed:
Ferried by Charon through the nightmare dead;
Steered through the circles, crying out to clutch,
And the loved body fleeing at our touch!
The black, resolving sorrow of the heart,
Laid bare to anguish, reaches every part
Of the collapsing kingdom of our sense.
No past or future: all is present tense.

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By the loose ends that lie about our way.
Men hang themselves, catching the nearest way.
And now the Peace: the drifting Ship of State,
The great wheels spinning . . . It is very late
Where we are drifting nearer to the reef
Like disenchanted dreamers, numbed with grief.
"What if this present were the world's last night?"
If it could *be*, if we could end this blight
Of blinded feeling! But we must go on:
Tomorrow-and-tomorrow stretches on
Like the willed misery of the Saints. That bell
Tolls in my head, telling a fare-thee-well
To all dead friends and lovers, to my wife,
To the sweet innocence that fouled my life.
From horror, there's an always open door:
Tonight, I'll get a bottle and a whore
And blow out all the candles in that nave
Where the Bride of Christ goes down into her grave.
And here's my bride of the pavements, down at heel,
With all the softness of high-tension steel.
She nags for money, saying she must pay
Police and concierge: I go her way,
Ease out my wallet: Sheila and the twins
(My babies like bowled-over bowling-pins)
Blink from a photo like the Triune Owls.
O bells and bridges, and the ruined howls
Of mother-sobbing, wounded, dying boys
In the crucified trenches! I get back my poise,
And go her way. Her room's a stinking hole
The size of a slit-trench, but I'll play my role,
Blow out the bells and candles in my head.
Blowsily *defututa*, she sags on the bed:
Tomorrow-and-tomorrow stretches there.
I clutch on hell-ropes, falling into air,
Into her body, into bought desire,
As the body's essence is sublimed in fire,
As the soul refines in Purgatory's fire.

III: SHEILA FARRELL

Sea Vineyard; California; 1927

These California sunsets are mostly blood:
Crayola-purple horrors: blood, blood, blood:

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Old Aztec altars, not a bit of chic
About them, or restraint. Look at that streak
Of colour: nature imitates Matisse
Out here; or worse, that Jew Chagall. I miss
The sunflower-easy sunsets back in Georgia.
And most: our old Sea Vineyard, back in Georgia.
We buried Mother Farrell here today.
Eighty-five years, and never well a day.
Poor Caroline, poor faded Georgia peach:
She never liked me. Well, I'm out of reach
For her, forever now. I'll run my life
And children now: my children *are* my life,
Especially Kevin, Mother's baby bear!
As for that crypto-Christian, sexual were-
Wolf and philanderer, my husband, I'll
Run *him* in the squirrel-cage four-minute mile.
Hitting the bottle, he'll pour off the cream.
Sex is so dirty, sometimes I could scream
When Michael begs me for it. Nasty stuff!
Aurea mediocritas: enough's enough.
("Back to *The Wind in the Willows*!" is my motto.)
My alcoholic husband's getting blotto
Tonight on bootleg red-eye. Oh, these wakes!
These snivelling Irish! So, he'll have the shakes
About an hour after midnight, come
Crawling to me: I'll fix his little drum . . .
My Irish bluffer, in your Legion cap
And K. of C. regalia, you're a slap-
Happy British-baiter. Reading Yeats,
Martyred Sir Roger Casement, certain dates
Stir you to murderous frenzy. You recall
The nameless Irish wilting by the wall
Under the British rifles, boyish haunts
Cut from a noose to quicklime under taunts
Of wet-eared Cockney mercenaries. These,
Nights when I held you, were the images
Racing with whiskey through your ruined mind.
A war-bride, disillusioned but resigned
To a brutal lecher always-on-the-make,
I spent my twenties coasting in your wake,
Hid from the mermaids breaking on your bow.
But I rebel and bicker at you, now.

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Broken-down sea-hulk, only forty-five,
You had your chance when Caroline was alive
And kicking, matriarchal monument,
But you're out of trumps and trumpets, all is spent.
All the bright company is gone to Death.
The mirror mists no longer with her breath.
The lilac-shadowy pierglass in the still
Parlour of Caroline's girlhood showed a hill
Far off, a sea of greening vines, the sea
Itself (a winking mirror of eternity):
All, all that made the old Sea Vineyard fair!
Ghosts used to linger in the twilight there:
The ghost of Susan, whom it always seemed
Held her in sad possession, so she dreamed
Of drowning in that ambiant glamour shed
On those lost girls, poor bees in amber, dead
Hellions in crinoline and jasmine, who
Were Cinderellas searching for a shoe.
Searching for Caroline, that faded belle,
Where should I look, in Heaven or in Hell?
She *was* her Purgatory all those years
She tapped on terraces, given to tears
Too easily; but, steel below the lace,
She fenced at soirees with astringent grace,
Parried the barbs of Proustian hostesses:
A Thomas Mann Rhine-maiden, sipping "fizz."
Poor sweet, the champagne flavour of those days
Before Fort Sumter, lingered as a haze
Upon you, drowning bee in honey: Lee,
The courtly failure, dreaming F. F. V.,
Stared from a chromo; Edgar Allan Poe
(A sturgeon gutted, but without the roe)
Brooded intensely from a marble bust.
A garbled Latin motto, dimmed with dust,
Glimmered above the swinging garden gate.
And there you lingered as the earth grew late.
Dials described a slowly swinging arc.
You were more sealed than Valéry's Jeune Parque
In your interior sensation, moon
Drawing you, dazzled, on, *au clair de lune* . . .
The earth grows late about you, and the dark
Angels descending waft your breathless barque

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Into a sea we cannot follow, moon
Like a storm-lantern sinking past the dune,
The cemetery, to the dwindled wave . . .
The heaped cape-jasmine's wilting on your grave:
A ghostly glimmer, like a handkerchief:
Your tremulous goodbye. The bough's last leaf
Is spiralled downward: Caroline, adieu!
All Appomattox is interred with you.
And yet my husband, drinking in his room,
Toasts your fled ghost with merry Irish gloom,
Savagely maudlin: he is Michael still.
But I have molded Kevin to my will
More than you ever molded Michael. Earth
Darkens: but it was darkened at your birth.
Sea Vineyard's darkened, but a little moon
Like a hook-lantern sways above the dune,
Searching and searching: and the earth grows late
About the Farrells, Caroline, the earth grows late.

IV: KATHERINE FARRELL

Sea Vineyard, California; 1936

We take the sea-path to the vineyard, heel
Hard at our horses, foam-flecked, and I feel
The stallion muscles tensing at my thigh,
Pacing the blood-stormed thunder. Kevin's high
Bedevilling wager echoes like a shell
Of murmuring sea . . . I give my rebel yell,
Nearing the stone of Grandpa: Angel wings
Drooping, jazz-trumpet in his hand. Air sings
Cold in my nostrils as I whip the roan
Faster and faster, passing Kevin, Grandpa's stone,
Graves of forgotten Farrells, through the gate
Into the vineyard, slump off Red, and wait
For Kevin, dizzy, all a soupy whirl . . .
He rides up, sulking: beaten by a girl,
By his own sister . . . But I catch his mare
Sharp by the reins, patting her matted hair,
And coax him down. His black eyes glitter murder:
If I had had the stallion . . . "Quite a rider,
Kathy, quite a rider." Sorrow haunts
His eyes like that Poe-portrait that our aunts,
Back home in Georgia, used to sigh on so:

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The screwball minstrel of the Land of Woe.
We're twins, except he got the Farrell looks,
The mean-as-murder spirit. Half the time in books,
Swims like a seal; at poker he's a menace;
He damn near walloped me at sissy tennis.
Now, hand in hand, we pass the scuppernong
Tangle that does not prosper here, its long
Tendrils a-sighing for the Old Tidewater, come
To rows of bursting Pinot, blooded, drum-
Tight globules, clustering, translucent, swung
Like sad unholy censers. Once, when I was young–
I mean a baby—Grandpa swung me high
To touch the grapes, and I began to cry,
Showered with bloody juice, that rabbit-skin
That Daddy wrapped his little hunter in.
But Daddy's gone a-hunting for a second wife.
His first in Europe has the climax of her life,
Sends cards to Kevin, never one to me:
Of statues, churches, fountains, Fabergé
Pillboxes, beads, Madonnas in a crypt,
All clouded in her angel-swooning script
That Kevin mimics nightly in his room.
At eighteen, he's the lambkin of her loom,
Despises poor old Daddy, gone to seed.
The Father-Daughter combo's more my speed.
But we're a double mess, without a mother,
The Farrell tomboy and her fruity brother.
We go together, down the rows, and stop
Now and again, to pick the grapes, and pop
Them, laughing, in each other's mouth, like Hosts,
Mocking the mulish Latin of the priests:
MAY THIS CONDUCT YOUR SOUL TO LASTING HELL.
Those bull-dyke Sisters taught me cant so well
I could have founded convents like Teresa. Kevin
Still half-believes, and plans to go to Heaven
Because Mamá is going there, first-class,
If she can ever find the time. We pass
The broken wagon, sagging on its sides,
Red in the sinking sun like panther-hides,
Its wheels a dusking-ember. Kevin tags
Me and I chase him where the wagon sags
Down an arroyo, touch him, and he turns

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Back, hitting at me blindly. Something burns
In me, some world I always wanted, never had . . .
And we roll down together in the bad
Light of the ruined hollow in a coarse
Frenzy to finish, plunder, know . . . Our hoarse
Voices are moaning, throats are dry, we curve
Together in the oldest darkness, nerve
And muscle aching, sadness in the groin,
The man into the woman sourcing pain,
Brother to sister in the broken darkness there.
. . . I sit up, shrivelling under Kevin's air
Of baffled triumph,— so he *wasn't* cherry!—
Kick him away, stand like a newborn calf on wary
Teetering pins, and run up blindly to the sun-
Disfigured vineyard, bloody vines, and run
Sobbing, and slashing with my riding-crop
At the man-and-woman-twisted vines, and lop
Off branches, crying, cursing, running till I reach
My stallion cropping crab-grass by the stunted peach
Tree Daddy brought from Georgia, catch the reins
Of Red, swing up, high-tail it down the lanes
Of growing darkness, passing graves of kith
And kin, and Grandpa's stone, the stunted myth
Of the Old Order, stupid Angels, ghosts,
Crying in sour rage as if the hosts
Of old avengers nagged me at the heels,
Down, down the sea-path. And the sunset wheels
Of Asia dipping on the water. And I ride
Into the sea, the bloodbath, panther-hide
Dazzled by dying brilliance. Looking back,
I see poor Kevin on the mare, a black
Avenger, my own fate and hatred, stare
At his crazy sister plunging. Reining Red, I stare
At my world in shattered ruin, the sea-mirror there
Showing the shivering stallion, the ruined daughter,
And the wheel of sunset dipping on the water.

V: LT. KEVIN FARRELL

Naples; 1944

In the middle of a war, I sit in Naples,
Dream of *ragazzi*, their exploding apples:
Sweet good-and-evil shaken from the bough.

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This gay bar's all the rage in Naples now:
The Rommel-hardened Tommies cruise for trade;
The U. S. Army's waiting to be made;
Here, in a tired world of knowing winks,
G.I.-corrupted Eyeties hustle drinks.
Marlowe, you knew them too: the maldive sharks.
I look outside: the hustlers prowl the parks.
The islands—Ischia and Capri—loom
Like stranded whales on the horizon, doom-
Haunted tourist horrors in that reddening bowl,
The sunset bay of Naples, cheek to jowl,
Spinning their sad perversions down the ages
Where hustlers home have gone, taking their wages . . .
The lingering queens who ruled this bay remain,
Frozen in history, nightmares of the brain:
In the bad purple light, Tiberius lours,
Dreaming of whips; bride of the Central Powers,
Krupp cruises there for lovers still, his hands
Spinning the wheel toward war. Past the dark strands,
The fisher-boats are bobbing home like corks
Or barrel-apples. "What is Faith without Good Works?"
The Saints have questioned. But I ask no more;
And say, with Tennyson, "Ask me no more."
Back in my Auden days, I used to drill
Down into bedrock, reading for a thrill
Like westerns, Proust on Time, Acton on Power.
But, having sold my soul to Eisenhower,
I let the Army answer for me now.
We enter this world without a golden bough,
Peering in vain for Vergil. Entering here,
I peered for Kathy. Sailors swilling beer
Were saying, "Honey, he's a doll." The low
Lanterns were swinging on the ceiling, slow
Circles of waning red-light dipping there
Among the broken-hearted *grands-misères*
The way the wheels of sunset used to dip
Back at Sea Vineyard, when we watched our Ship
Of Fools a-sailing, and we turned to kiss,
Brother and Sister, in the passionless
Passion . . . But, I switched in time to men.
"Rome is so sordid," Mother wrote me, when
She toured on Daddy's alimony checks.

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Poor dear Mamá, if she could see my sex
Excursions! But, she'd probably only say,
"It's so aristocratic, being gay.
And there's his wife: it's not as if he *meant*—"
Well, in my time, I've done a regiment.
So, if I didn't mean it, what a waste!
But, it's like papayas: a cultivated taste.
And there's my wife, trusting as Lucifer:
My cousin Anne. But, mostly, I prefer
The husbands I have had in Uncle Sam's
Service this war: the ithyphallic lambs,
Fresh out of boot-camp, whom I'd entertain
The pants off. It was never any strain
For them to play the other side of the street
In that green season. Some of them were sweet;
And they were faithful to me, in their fashion.
So, who's to call it "simulated passion"?
How jolly and warm the tonsilling was at times . . .
I'd sit in Hell for that a hundred times
A day with Ser Brunetto. Heaven knows
I've done my damnedest to be damned: long rows
Of Irish Jansenists made me what I am;
I owe it all to Mother . . . Little Lamb,
I lay there, trusting, waiting to be wolfed
By the Devouring Mother, sweet, so soft . . .
I pick a sailor, coldly, catch his eye.
He blushes slightly, tentative and shy:
"I've never had an officer before."
(I've had them, honey: mostly, they're a bore.)
Over our drinks, he tells me he's from Texas.
(Eventually, of course, they're *all* from Texas.
Eventually, they *look* alike: I'd swear
I had him back in Dago just last year.)
He says he'd like to "kick the ball about."
We duck the swinging lanterns, going out.
Night's settled onto Naples. From my jeep,
I watch the traffic. Horny, half-asleep,
He slumps beside me. Jolting up the street,
Dodging patrols and pimps, we crest the neat
Rise above Naples, to my *garçonniere* . . .
We fall to kissing on the terrace, where,
Far to the west, we can see a sickle moon

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Sinking on Capri . . . Sinking in the swoon
Of sex, naked as newborn apples, shame
Cast with our clothes aside, we ride the flame
Flapping our bodies, points of brilliance, glowing,
Trilling of Sanctus bells, O whirlpools flowing,
Starlight and floating flowers on the sea,
Melting of mirrors, melting into me
His body, mine to his, till we are tight
Apples now falling from the Tree of Night:
Circles of swirling apples on the black
Mirrors that tease the starlight, whirling back
Into that darkness where the world was made,
Where the Tree of Night shook apples down in shade
And the Devil cast up Adam from the dust.
We ride the exploding apples, shaking, lust-
Demolished, shattered, shivering on the shore
Of withdrawing passion, as we cry for more:
Sword of the crucifixion, dazzling spike!
But, after a while, I guess, they're all alike,
These acts of darkness . . . Now, a little sad,
We cling together, shivering, in the bad
Gloom of the after-midnight where the moon
Hooks on the cloven hoof of Capri. Soon,
Even its little sickle will be gone.
The apple-crimsoned ocean crests at dawn.

VI: ANNE FARRELL

Sea Vineyard, Georgia; 1950

The sad bees circle through the autumn heat
Dusted with gold. The stupefying weight
Of summer's dissolution makes the vines
Droop with their drowsy burden: summer shines
Still in the brandied ferment of the grape,
While, in a drouth of leaves, cicadas scrape
Their bodies in a brittle passion. Slow,
Like brilliant birds of passage, branches blow,
Dipping and tossing in a mournful pride
Above a field where Southern honour died,
Across the dark, defeated crosses . . . Time,
Devoured spectres, you are tinged with Time,
Enchanted in the Proustian precious page.
Why do I meet you always in a rage
Of pride and deprivation, all the tales

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Told round the tallow, of the brilliant halls
And hostesses? . . . The peacock airs and graces
Of planters' headstrong daughters in their laces,
The rose flung to the daring duellist,
Bourbon and Horace and the games of whist,
The ladies at their never-ending dance—
Yes! and the bitterness of maiden aunts
Who lived too long—to see their world collapse
In burned plantations, military maps.
And so could only weave a tale of fear,
Silken and cunning, for a child's still ear,
Of painted, pained remembrances, the stock
Of pious recollections—"Mother's clock
Came all the way from Paris. When she wed,
A young man put a bullet through his head.
They found him clutching a despairing sonnet.
She put another feather in her bonnet."—
So that I shared their ghosts and burdened blood
With Kevin like a shameful secret. Blood!
It falls in floods, like a red rain from Heaven:
Our blood. Where are you now, O Kevin, Kevin?
I fall through sunset——

Who has rung those bells?
My gig moves in the sunset. Yankee shells
Are whistling closer to our little town.
The valley wears that wonderful old tone
Of Rembrandt, brown, suffused and stained; the storm
Is coming nearer. In the dusk, a form
Breaks through the cedar shadows, and a face,
A boy's, turns to me with a wounded grace.
I halt the gig and hold him as he slithers
Helpless into my arms. The horse's withers
Are wet and shaking as we flee the tide.
I prop the wounded soldier at my side
And turn in at the black deserted gate.
I light the lamp . . . and then a wave of hate
Washes upon me: he is wearing Blue.
Slowly, because there's nothing else to do,
I rip my petticoat and bind his wounds.
He quivers in his sleep like hunting-hounds—
And then he wakes and smiles into my eyes
And a long shiver runs along my thighs
Like grass-fire . . . I can hear the Paris clock

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With passionate precision, and the shock
Of shells exploding, ah, like summner hail!
Under the loosened shirt, his ribs are frail
As any parasol. I dowse the lamp
And, in the blackness, stumble to his damp
And damaged body, being careful not
To touch the wounds. His salty mouth is hot,
His limbs turn painfully, like leaden bars.
My tongue is all a-tingle, drinking stars.
Painful and pleasured. I begin to shake.
The stars slide at the window like the snake
Of Eden, lost, O Kevin, Kevin——

Red

The autumn world I wake to. Kevin's dead.
Here, in the ruby light, the leaves begin
Their restless rustling—like the leaves of sin,
Of lovers lost and tossed within the cold
And violent mistral of Hades, old
Women and Men, the selfish young of Yeats,
All whirled and whistled through the ivory gates!
The red rain falls upon the Angels, falls
On vines and terraces and family walls,
The blockhouse and the empty peacock roost,
And splashes on the splendid page of Proust
Who understood neurotic women's fears.
For here the ruby glitter of my tears,
Suffused with sunset, like a useless jewel
Is worn. Where is my lover and my Fool?
And where my amber bees? Quick, guardsman, quick!
But, gentle Madam, he is dead—not quick.
And honeyed Death hath slain the amber bees
And overturned the hive—and, if it please,
You must renew their humming in your mind
If you would keep their sound. Go blind, go blind,
Hounds on the leashes, hunters at the horn!
O Kevin, lost at sea, your child was born
Blackened and dead, the child you never saw,
The night you sank in Neptune's stormy jaw.
Pain must continue—or it is not pain.
There is no end, poor ghost, to this red rain.
Sea Vineyard, sinking in its sunset stain,
Mourns for the ruined Farrells, what they were
Before they darkened, war to war to war.

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Variations on a Theme—By R. Cork

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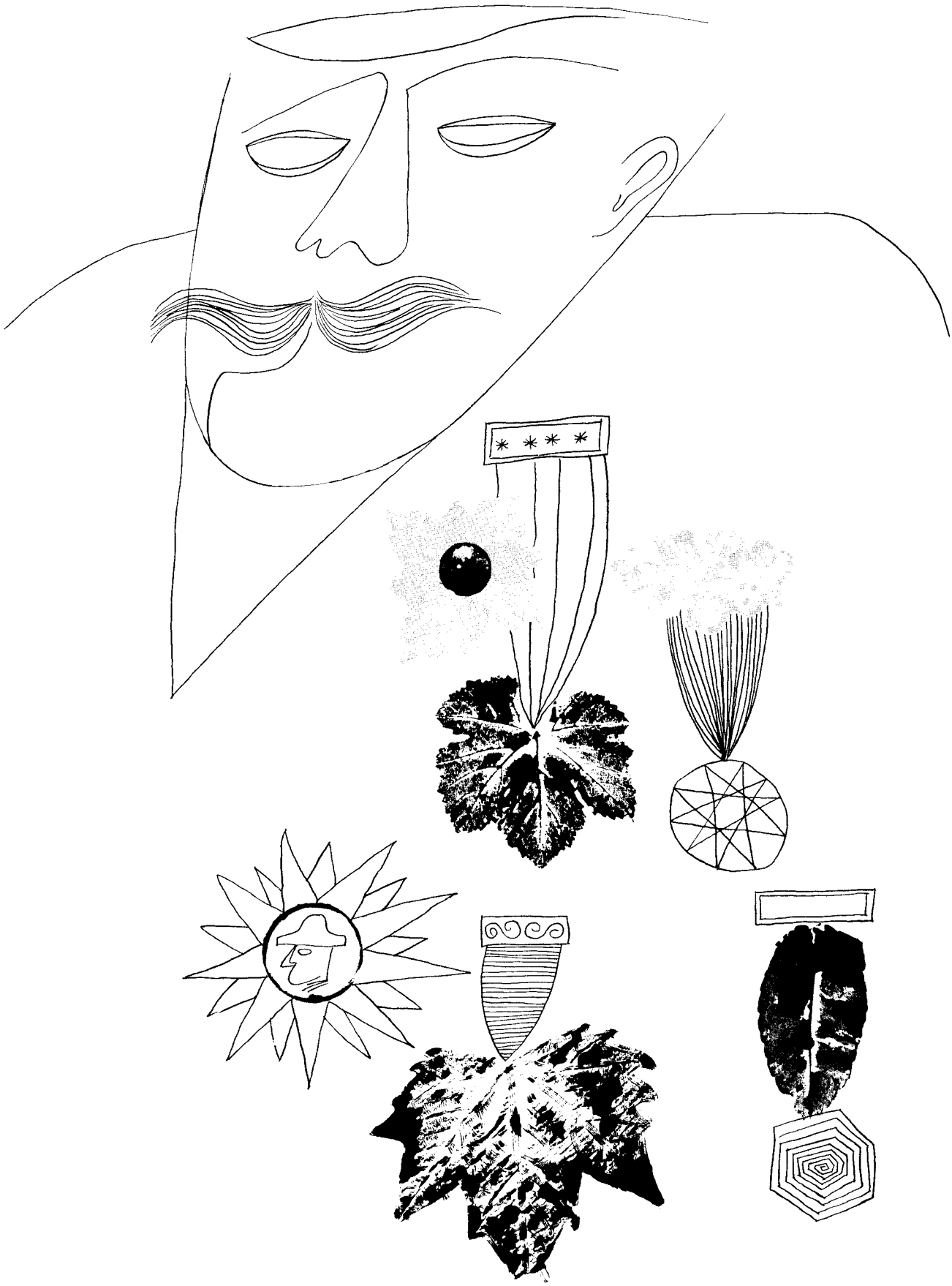

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The Priest as Scapegoat in the modern Catholic Novel

Francis L. Kunkel

MANY MODERN CATHOLIC NOVELISTS have examined the clerical milieu. Some view the priest's role in the twentieth century as primarily moral—he practices benevolence, sets a good example, and supports the right causes; others regard the part played by the priest as primarily spiritual—he is God's plenipotentiary set on earth to administer the divine sacraments and participate in Christ's redemptive mission. The former write "good priest" novels; the latter write good novels about all manner of priests, so that even the clerical character who is a failure in a holy vocation "still retains," in the words of Horton Davies in *A Mirror of the Ministry in Modern Novels*, "his relevance in pointing to that intersection of Eternity and time where God became Man and hallowed our human strivings."

G. K. Chesterton, Bruce Marshall, A. J. Cronin, Giovanni Guareschi, and Henry Morton Robinson focus on exterior struggles and pen portrayals of the priesthood, ecclesiastical and anthropocentric, that are concerned with compassion, moral integrity, and service. By imitating the ethical ideal of the Master, by bearing natural witness, and by meditating little, Father Brown, Father Malachy, Father Chisholm, Don Camillo, and the Cardinal show that life with God, if not beautiful, can be comfortable, at least. Georges Bernanos, Graham Greene, François Mauriac, Sven Stolpe, and Morris West concentrate on interior crises and sweat portrayals of the priesthood, theological and theocentric, that ooze the mystery of grace and sin. By imitating the sacrificial ideal of the Master, by bearing supernatural witness, and by meditating much, the country priest, the whisky priest, Abbé Calou, Abbé Auclair, and Monsignor Meredith show that life with God, if not a terrifying ordeal, can be frightening, at least. The "good priest" novel is thus superficial, phenomenological, and saccharinely sentimental; whereas the good novel about a priest is profound, psychological and mystical, and realistically Christian.

It is interesting to note the use of the priest as a Christ-like scapegoat in the works of the latter group. By exploring various clerical figures from several novels an explanation can be offered to account for the recurrence of the archetype.

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THE MODERN NOVELIST, Catholic or otherwise, who has devoted most attention to the priest is Georges Bernanos. Probably no one else has painted the dark night of the priestly soul so skillfully as Bernanos. "He was the first to see in the priest the real hero and martyr of the modern world," announces Wallace Fowlie in *A Guide to Contemporary French Literature*. "And he, in the tradition of Léon Bloy, assigned to Catholics their real function of worriers and disturbers of the peace, of consciences never at rest. He hurls his priests into all possible dramas of life, sexuality and death." Bernanos' priest heroes are much alike. They are unworldly, unpopular, unselfish, unintellectual, humble, charitable, sad, and saintly—in contradistinction to the popular notion that saints are not sad. According to an *America* article by Neil Hurley, S.J., the heroic Bernanos priest is extraordinarily holy, "the type Chrysostom described as the priest of gold offering the chalice of wood—in short, a priest who woos real poverty, undergoes immense trials to win souls, and suffers severely from misunderstanding and desolation."

Not one to flinch from the most enormous task a novelist can set himself to, Bernanos chronicled mystical experience. His priest mystics, with their immunity to human respect, their zeal for corporeal penance, their hostility to humanistic learning, and their fondness for striking the Manichaean note, are the twentieth century heirs of St. Peter Damian, a leading medieval mystic. Bernanos has artistically analyzed three such fictional priests: Abbé Donissan, *The Star of Satan*; Abbé Chevance, *Joy*; and the Curé d'Ambricourt, *The Diary of a Country Priest*. Masterfully and subtly, the reader of these novels finds himself drawn into the rarefied world inhabited by giant priestly souls where mystical phenomena alternate between the fullness of heavenly rapture and the emptiness of hellish deceit.

The sole goal the mystical priest is aware of is the imitation of Christ. The profoundest lesson he learns is that the deepest fellowship with Christ is in shared suffering. So that the last earthly plea of Abbé Donissan, raised to his Judge, bears witness to his singleminded devotion to the Word-wounded-on-the-Cross. "But still suffering remains to us, and that is the thing we share with You, the sign and hallmark of our election." Coupled with this Christ-like attitude towards pain is a neurotic one, however. The Abbé Donissan "who was destined for forty years to look on sinners with the eyes of Jesus Christ" is nonetheless tormented sometimes by the effusion of a strange love. On these occasions he scourged himself remorselessly. "The blind hate of himself which inspired him was of the kind which nothing here below can appease." Masochism is allied with Manichaeanism. Abbé Donissan's laudable conscious motive is undermined. Basically he chastises his body in order to express his deep-seated revulsion for the flesh. "His mind numbed by the intensity of physical pain had only one vague thought—to reach and destroy the very principle of evil in his own intolerable flesh." Freud is an uneasy ally of Manes.

THE MORALE OF BERNANOS' priests is low. Abbé Donissan, further displaying his Manichaean bent, suspects happiness and declares: "All joy is sinful. . . . All joy comes from Satan." The stirrings of grace, he concludes, are without sensual attraction. This zeal for non-attachment leaves him entirely destitute of worldly consolation, the symptoms of which are "his utter mistrust of himself together with a deep dejection, a hopelessness impossible to relieve." The abrasive sense of abandonment and the oppressve sense of futility are also experienced by the country priest, the Curé d'Ambricourt, who longs to pray but cannot, because he believes that "at last God had withdrawn Himself from me. . . . God has punished me."

This soul torment that rages inside Bernanos' vicars of Christ is the inevitable outcome of their ultimate role, that of *alter Christus*. Their affinity with Christ is most evident in their employment as scapegoats. Abbé Menou-Segrais, Abbé Donissan's pastor, recognizes this function when he says to the clumsy young priest, "I am giving you back to the hungry souls who will feed on you." And "feed on" Donissan they do, so that his death in the confessional where he spent so much of life, like his beloved prototype the Curé d'Ars, is fittingly symbolic. His one mission, to

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raise his hand in absolution until death over souls possessed by sin, so filled him "with hatred of the enemy" that to save sinners he "offered all that I have or ever shall have—my life to begin with. . . . But that's so little! . . . The consolations of the Holy Ghost." The country priest, who refers to himself as "a thing to be used by everyone," also dies for and from the sins of his congregation. He endures a humiliating death of atonement for a proud countess whose "words have all the callousness of hell in them." And Abbé Chevance and Chantal, the holy girl in *Joy*, must pay the terrible ransom—ignominious death—required to restore Abbé Cénabre, the despairing rationalist, to faith.

ALWAYS IN THE CENTER of Bernanos' stage stands the forlorn figure of the scapegoat priest. The Curé d'Ambricourt reflects that if our Lord created his "face . . . for anything, He made it to be slapped." With zest his parishioners, avaricious peasants, greedy grocers, and an aristocratic family withering away from the dry-rot of pride and self-love, co-operate. The adults write poison-pen letters to him; worse, even the children torment him: a corrupt little girl, egged on by others, pursues him "with surreptitious oglings, grimacing aping a grown-up woman in a way that is very hard to bear. . . . Children are children —but, oh, why should these little girls be so full of enmity? What have I done?" Driven to distraction and near-madness by this irrational animosity, the diarist fancies that "the village has nailed me up here on a cross and is at least watching me die." Abbé Donissan, likewise a pariah in a Roman collar—and for the same reason, because he acts literally on Christ's advice: "My kingdom is not of this world"—observes that "the saint is always alone, at the foot of the cross. No other friend."

Rayner Heppenstall, in *The Double Image*, charges that Bernanos' scapegoat priests are more pre-Christian and post-Christian than Christian, more like witch doctors and psychoanalysts than like the Saviour. The statement is not without merit but the emphasis is unfortunate. That there are non-Christian elements in Bernanos' priest portraits is incontestable, considering the Jewish origin and pagan tradition of the scapegoat, but this must not be allowed to obscure the fact that his priests are haloed with Christian mystery, not primitive magic. They follow the redemptive footsteps of the Divine Blame-Bearer, not the temporal tracks of goats and mere human scapegoats. In imitation of Christ, the Curé d'Ambricourt is scourged with society's frustrations and pent-up furies and is crowned with its hatreds, its sins. And Abbé Donissan becomes another Man of Sorrows, taking upon his own shoulders the pain and the lie of others to absorb them, to ransom them.

WITH THE EXCEPTION of one or two laymen, the scapegoats in Graham Greene's works are always priests.

The nameless priest in Greene's *The Power and the Glory* is relentlessly pursued by a nameless lieutenant of police in the state of Tabasco in Southern Mexico during the Communist persecution of the Catholic Church in the nineteen thirties. The pursued is the one remaining Catholic priest in the province, who tries desperately to avoid being taken by the Red Shirts in order to carry on his humble ministrations among the people, many of whom remain stubbornly loyal to the Faith. To the Lieutenant, the Priest represents the Church which was so deficient in social justice as to deserve liquidation. He makes a modern scapegoat of him, blaming the Priest, the sole visible sign of Catholicism in the whole countryside, for misery, poverty, and superstition.

The Priest also acts as a scapegoat for his people. Twice he seeks safety; twice he is called back to administer the last rites to the dying. There is no escape. "He was like the King of a West African tribe, the slave of his people, who may not even lie down in case the winds should fail." Lest God should cease to exist "in all this space between the sea and the mountains," this brandy-bibber dare not stop baptizing, hearing confessions, and saying Mass—even at the risk of his death in mortal sin. The Catholics of Tabasco need his sacramental powers to loose their sins. "When he raised the Host," above a packing-case altar while celebrating a furtive and forbidden Mass in an unventilated hut, "he could imagine their faces lifted like famished dogs."

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THE PRIEST AS SCAPEGOAT images Christ. In the manner of the High Priest, whose sense of eternal responsibility for others was demonstrated on Calvary, this meek Mexican curate withdraws the claims of self. In enduring sacrificial suffering for others he becomes Christ-like. The events in *The Power and the Glory* preceding the execution of the Priest intentionally imitate the actions that led up to the crucifixion: the ignoble half-caste betrayer is a yellow-toothed Judas; the agony in the cell block, Gethsemane; the temptation to escape to Las Casas, the temptation of Christ in the desert; the solace the Priest offers the dying Yankee murderer, the solace Christ offers the good thief; the Lieutenant's stronger desire to destroy the Priest than the Yankee murderer, the multitude's stronger desire to shed Christ's blood than Barabbas'; craven Padre José's refusal to shrive the Priest, the denial by Peter. Unimaginable glory pools around the Priest's death, because he dies not for the good and the beautiful but for the half-hearted and the corrupt, just as Christ died for all the depravity in the world. Thus the power and the glory of the Father bursts forth from the whisky priest with the bastard child.

Greene also portrays other priests who are exiles of various kinds. Long eligible for leave from the rigors of life on the west coast of Africa, Father Rank, in *The Heart of the Matter*, prefers to remain where he is, going on assuming his parishioner's sinful warps, even though he rarely works them back into place. *The Living Room*'s Father Browne, an amputee confined to a wheelchair is exiled from his priestly duties. It is implied that the loss of his legs and his enforced idleness have choked his channels of grace so that he is an ineffectual scapegoat. Full of self-pity, he has no room for the sins of others. His niece commits suicide because of his inability to blot up her sins and bring down help from God.

The bibulous priest remains Greene's only efficient scapegoat as well as his most despised. He is hated almost as much by those for whom he risks his life as by those who risk their lives to take him. Greene's priests, only a little less indelibly than Bernanos', testify to the accuracy of Rayner Heppenstall's conclusion: "The scapegoat's function, of which all men feel the need, has receded into unconsciousness, and 'the cunning and selfish savage' of the twentieth century has succumbed to the final indignity of hating the useful saviour-beast on whom he lays the burden of his sins."

WOMAN OF THE PHARISEES presents François Mauriac's most extensive portrait of a priest, in the person of the Abbé Calou. He is another outstanding exhibit in the gallery of clerical scapegoats. He knows that "one can always suffer for others" and that a "man can gain merit for himself or for those he loves." He obeys this precept of the Mystical Body when he offers his life for Jean de Mirbel, a recalcitrant boy entrusted to his care. Meditating before a "cross bearing the figure of the nailed God," it occurred to the Abbé Calou that a priest was most a priest when "fastened to the same instrument of torture and exposed to the same derision."

The priest as a scapegoat and redeemer is thrown into relief by the contrast between the Abbé Calou and Brigitte Pian, the Woman of the Pharisees. As Nelly Cormeau, in *The Art of François Mauriac*, observes: "The Abbé Calou is opposed to the Woman of the Pharisees, like modesty to ostentation, as humility to pride, as love to vindictiveness, as existence to illusion." Yet their point of departure is similar—they both believe it is their duty to interfere in the concerns of others—subject to this important difference: Brigitte tries to turn her neighbor into a replica of herself and tries to force him to see with her eyes; whereas Abbé Calou feels that "our concern should be limited to walking before the Divine Grace as the dog goes in front of the invisible hunter." Also while Brigitte is made giddy by the spectacle of her own merits and pleads her desserts; the Abbé Calou stands in the presence of God feeling "as naked, as much stripped of all merit, as utterly defenseless as a man can well be," and pleads his love. In short, contrasted in this novel are two kinds of people who try to serve God: those who do not know the true nature of love but are certain they do, and those who do know the true nature of love but are uncertain they do.

THE LAMB presents many of the same characters—with the notable exception of the Abbé

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Calou who died at the close of *Woman of the Pharisees*—fifteen years later, but, Mauriac assures the reader in the foreword, it "is neither a sequel nor an epilogue." It is rather the story of a new character, Xavier Dartigelongue, the youthful seminarian who is the sacrificial victim of the title. "He was a young male of twenty two, not different from those it had been given him to approach and to know, save by the presence in him of that insatiable heart, that hunger for contact, for suffering, for death, which he had found in no human creature."

Xavier is terrifyingly steadfast in his love, in his desire to be immolated. "That is precisely why I want to be a priest. . . . I want to take my place with sinners, to be dedicated to their service, handed over to them, saved with them, damned with them." Jean de Mirbel, now a grown man, caught up in a loveless marriage diabolically seeks to pervert this ideal. Meeting Xavier by chance on a train, Mirbel prevails upon the young man to accompany him to his country home at Larjuzon ostensibly to straighten out his snarled domestic life. Actually Mirbel's intent is monstrous: he would make Xavier a private messiah. This Xavier resists: he will not carry Mirbel's cross unless he can also carry the crosses of all the other unloving and unloved souls at Larjuzon. He gets his way: he bears the weight of all their crosses. Unable to monopolize Xavier's redemptive mission, Mirbel bares his maniacally possessive urge. "I was so jealous, so madly jealous. I had to have a victim sacrificed for me alone. . . . I didn't want to share him with anybody. The whole of his young life must be given for the redemption of mine. There must be nothing left over for others."

Ironically the significance of Xavier's total immolation is lost to everyone except Mirbel who, after causing the seminarian's death, muses: "I know now that love does exist in this world, but it is crucified in the world and we with it."

THREE PRIESTS figure prominently in Sven Stolpe's *Sound of a Distant Horn*, an old priest and two younger ones. Father Perezcaballero, a young Dominican, wants the crown without the cross; Dom Dusolier, an aged Benedictine, knows better: no cross, no crown; Abbé Auclair, a young secular priest, is so lost in admiration of the cross that he sometimes forgets the crown.

At one point in the novel, Father Perezcaballero asks for *correction fraternelle*, the brotherly admonition that is an established practice in the Order.

> "He would go from one friar to another asking the same anxious question, 'What do you think of me?' He knew that they were all under obligation to answer frankly. He had a feeling that he was in for a trying time. But what actually happened surpassed his worst expectations. With very few exceptions the friars' answers were almost literally the same: 'You are gifted but arrogant. You are intelligent but have no charity. You are able but self-centered.' "

The truth about himself, which he painfully acknowledges, is manifest in his behavior. He is a gifted orator and a renowned preacher, but his sermons are not without considerable ostentation in the form of artificial gestures, affected speech, and melodramatic props. There is a flaw in his faith: he cannot perform any genuinely charitable acts. In the words of a confrère, he seems "to be encased in a sort of stainless steel." His vocation is a strong one, but it is based on a determination to distinguish himself. He is little interested in saving souls. "Human beings disgusted him: he had found them unaesthetic, unlovely. . . . The human animal was, as a rule, a dirty and pitiable form of life."

But Father Perezcaballero's gravest defection from the sacerdotal state is the lie that he lives: he really believes that his conduct in a concentration camp was beyond reproach. "He had not betrayed anybody; his behaviour had been unimpeachable; he had not brought any shame on his country: from the human point of view it was quite understandable that he should have done all he could to avoid useless and unnecessary pain, like everyone else." It is not until after a painful examination of conscience, provoked by his spiritual adviser, that he becomes aware of his hypocrisy and realizes what he would have done had he really loved Christ. "He who had so often preached on the subject of vicarious suffering, who knew so well how much mankind owed to all those who freely took upon themselves the

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burden of sacrifice," would then have declared his solidarity with those about to die, by marching at their side, offering up his own life, and taking their guilt upon himself.

OLD DOM DUSOLIER, the spiritual counselor assigned to Father Perezcaballero, is the instrument chosen by God to humble the proud Dominican, even though the latter looks down on him. The younger priest has every natural advantage: he is tall and erect, has splendidly chiselled features—"a face that reminded many people of St. Dominic himself"—has a fascinating bass voice, deep and resonant, is one of the most sought-after confessors in Paris, and thinks himself a most gifted person. "Bald-pated Dom Dusolier," on the other hand, "with his clumsy walk and lopsided horse's head . . . could hardly ever speak except in the most stumbling sort of sentences. . . . Some children came to him for confession, but mainly it was the very old or the very simple." Always "he chose the simplest jobs for himself: he loved washing up and sweeping floors." The older priest has every supernatural advantage: he has no flaw in his faith; he resembles the people Jesus gathered around Him. When it is necessary to administer a rebuke to another, he does so without ever feeling superior. There is not a mock but a profound humility in him that undoubtedly plays an important part in the ultimate "conversion of Father Perezcaballero.

To an even greater extent, Abbé Auclair's life is living testimony to the Gethsemane approach: "Not my Will, but Thine be done." He is one of God's idiots, "one of those simple, pious, uncomplicated people who, with all their foolishness, are nearer to God than the rest of us," a variation on Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin. Abbé Auclair is happy only when he is "treated as Our Lord Himself was treated—like a fool." When he is sent to a madhouse and beaten by the inmates, he rejoices in the opportunity to suffer for someone else. "Oh, vicarious suffering, that is our secret! I often think I should give my whole life up to God—I mean my eternal life—to redeem the poor lacerated creatures." Pain and prayer prevail when nothing else can. Abbé Auclair rehabilitates the most hardened delinquents, cures the sick, mends broken marriages, and inspires people to go to confession and Holy Communion in unprecedented numbers.

THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE by Morris West is the story of Monsignor Blaise Meredith's last days on earth. Dying of cancer, feeling empty, "devoid of humanity and godliness," he is nonetheless sent by Rome as the Devil's Advocate to a small town in Southern Italy to investigate the cause of a candidate for canonization. The candidate is Giacomo Nerone who first appeared in the impoverished little town of Gemello Minore during World War II. Less than a year after he was dead—executed by the very people who later proclaimed his sainthood.

When God fashions a cross for Monsignor Meredith, the aloof prelate, at first, refuses to accept it and retreats into the bolt-hole of self-condemnation and self-pity. He concludes that "whatever virture had flowered out of his ministry was sacramental and not personal. No poor would bless him for their bread, no sick for their courage, no sinners for their salvation. He had done everything that was demanded of him; yet he would die empty and within a month his name would be a blown dust on the desert of the centuries." But gradually, schooled by the simple people of Calabria and exalted by the heroic story of Giacomo Nerone, he learns how "to love and to desire, to feel with another's pain, to share another's joy." The charity he thus acquires lightens his last hours, so that he is no longer alone "with a small gray death growing in his belly."

In Gemello Minore, Monsignor Meredith becomes less concerned for the Cause of Beatification than for the welfare of certain souls, particularly Paolo Sanduzzi, the son of Giacomo Nerone, who is on the verge of being corrupted by an English painter. In the following agonized words, the Monsignor begs God to accept his submission as the price of the boy's salvation: "Take me, O God! Make me what you want . . . a wonder or a mockery! But give me the boy—for his father's sake!" The final surrender to Love occurs at the moment when Monsignor Meredith makes this act of abandonment to God's Will and accepts his own "crucifixion."

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The Devil's Advocate dramatizes a frequently neglected but unique aspect of Catholicism, namely the consideration of death in its inevitable association with Christ's agony. "Catholic" novels have presented the faith as a theological riddle, as a retirement plan, as a happiness pill; they rarely present Catholicism in one of its most traditional roles: a way to die. But Monsignor Meredith's last testament conveys most eloquently the tested thesis that death can be "a good thing":

> "We get old; we get sick. And the last and greatest loneliness is death, which I am facing now. There are no pills to cure that. No formulas to charm it away. It's a condition of men that we can't escape. If we try to retreat from it, we end in a darker hell—ourselves. But if we face it, if we remember that there are a million others like us, if we try to reach out to comfort them and not ourselves, we find in the end that we are lonely no longer. We are in a new family, the family of man, whose Father is God Almighty."

None of these characters waste their lives in the priesthood, however much at times some of them feel as though they are. These fishers of men, finding themselves adrift on a great sea of suspicion and hostility, frequently regard themselves as ecclesiastical failures, because the Christian community, fearful of the love of God, shuns their beatific bait. Despite this, they are sometimes successful; here and there several persons learn about the love of God. Some few souls come to understand what the lives of these priests illustrate: the tremendous burden placed on each person by the love of God and the duty of corresponding to this love. For as Helmut Hatzfield, in *Trends and Styles in Twentieth Century French Literature*, points out: "To substitute anything whatsoever for the love of God is the fundamental madness which spurns the Redemption."

A few of these fictional priests have merit in them because they never sin; all have merit because of the terrible sacrifices they lovingly make for others as they retread the *via dolorosa*. All have good works to count: even those who, having sins to repent, are afflicted with sunspots. They appreciate the fact that virtue is not negative. They are not strangers in the human family; there is passion in their lives. The dignity of need, as well as gratitude for a shared suffering, they know. In short, they love God, because they have loved their neighbors as themselves.

The same exalted vocation – the miraculous therapy of vicarious suffering and shared merit—is posed for each of these sacerdotal scapegoats. Their obligation is to the Communion of Saints, men working out their salvation together. In saving others, the priest saves himself. The doctrine of the Mystical Body, fleshed out in these novels, actually has a further implication: men are saved together or they are not saved at all. In other words, man never attains salvation alone but only in his social milieu: the priest with his congregation, in this case. Abbé Donissan shows a clear understanding of this when he remonstrates with Satan, who in the guise of a horse-dealer appears to him one night, as follows: "Haven't you ruined enough souls? Do you need fresh prey? You are in my hands. I shall speak the words which fill you with horror. I shall pin you down like a screech owl in the center of my prayers. Or else you shall not leave in peace the souls that are in my charge."

Bernanos, Greene, Mauriac, Stolpe, and West do not deplore all scapegoats and regard them as passé, as Heppenstall does, on the idealistic but impractical grounds "that human society ought to develop in the direction of greater individual responsibility," for they realize that so long as unexpiated sins flourish the blame-bearer performs a necessary task. Through the portrait of the priest as a scapegoat in the tradition of Christ, they dramatize what they consider to be the mission of the Church today, an unparalleled call to sacrifice and suffering. Few other contemporary novelists have dared as much.

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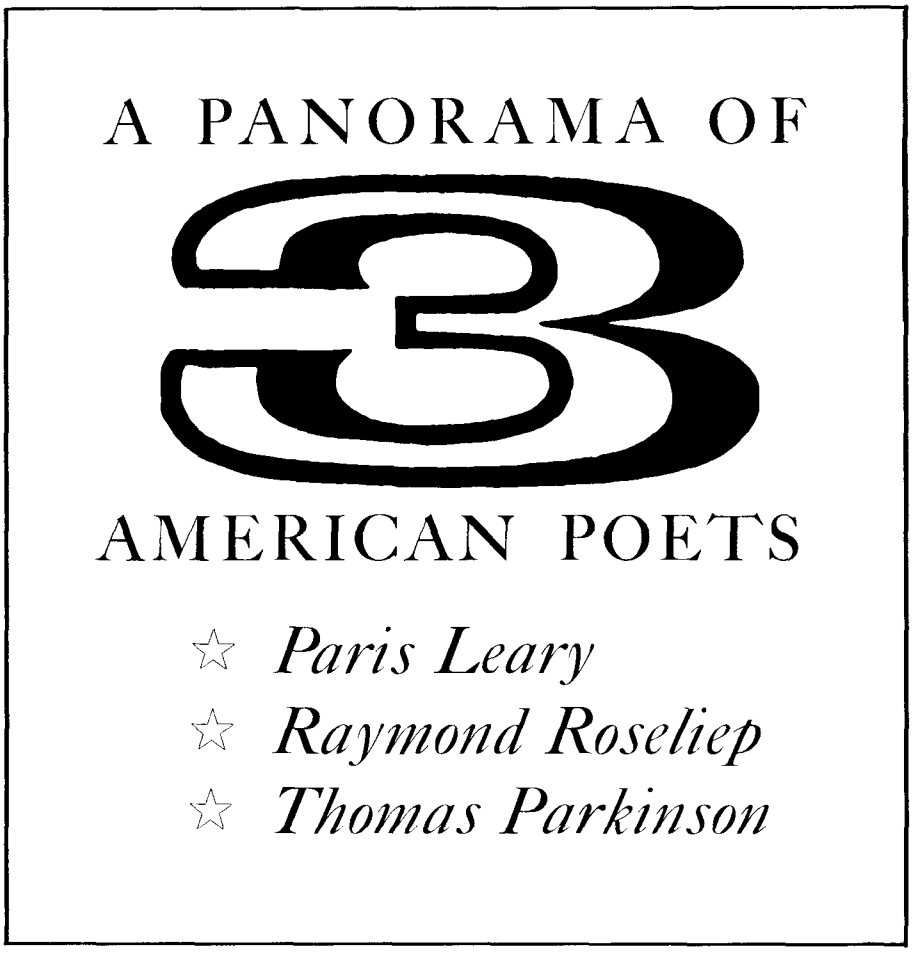

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PARIS LEARY

TO A GREAT POET

Yours were the eyes of Nineteen Thirty-Five
Which saw the cancer in the golden bodies
Of the beautiful boys in the Aryan forest,
Horrified by what you most desired.
You knew the world which Constantine began
Was done for. When my father woke at night
Your voice interpreted his waking fears.

You saw behind the highways' stucco villas
The white pylons moving in the moonlight
And rejoiced to see the green fields devastated
For the new world just around the corner
Where *laissez-faire* meant love and no one fagged
In Public Schools where Marx and Freud were masters
And the poet was mechanic to the State.

And now you sing the private man and drown
The music of the common world in Scotch
Or lyric gin which makes the decades blur
Between you and the faces of the friends
You satirize, the boys you have corrupted,
The image leering from your shaving-glass
In camp facsimile of Dorian Gray.

What is there in the several religions
You have drawn like a veil across
Your early poems?—freedom from the Spain
You fought for in a Chelsea pub?—a shroud
For the lingering hope that died in Budapest?
An era's hopes and griefs are elegiac
In the scarred testament of your wrecked face.

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COMMENCEMENT

Stud to the lovelies I could never touch,
with cheeks like tan satin pinked with flowers
you are suddenly taken up with Xenophon,
eschew "all that cheap physical stuff,"
and are much given to the word "vicarious."
Our conversation over the season's bock
concerns itself now with Pericles,
Alcibiades the fink, Contemp.
Brit. Lit., all of which you read,
along with Dan Chaucer and me,
with the high earnestness of an archivist
drunk on the word "sensibility."
And I who brought you to this pass
grieve, rejoicing, over the loss
of your fiery vagrant boyhood
and the years you walked through like a lettered beach-boy.
Welcome, welcome to the world of ideas,
where we poets, dons, and other butchers
carve up the meat of innocence to serve
the jaded palate of an aging world.
I rejoice, grieving, at your latest
powers of discrimination, taste,
and critical intelligence.
Welcome, welcome, to all the bloody insights
I worked to give you, loving what I knew
Iwas taking from you. You are secured
for graduate school, the mortal thesis,
and every habit of the tutored mind
which will crucify you on the cross
of your best interests. I have betrayed
you for the silver of your own good,
one coin for each year of my life
(my purse grows heavy, heavy, year by year).
I desired only the outside consolation
that, like the other disciple, secret uncle,
I may offer you my own tomb,
and beg forgiveness for doing the only thing.

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ONAN

Whether Two-Backed Beast or Many-Splendoured-Thing
their loves are in the last analysis a bore.
When will the buffs and punks of verse stop using lovers
as the image to silence protest, clinch an argument,
a gauntlet thrown in the boughten teeth of Dean or Daddy?
A year's election or the market price of wheat
makes or breaks more of reality than lovers.

Love should be practised like Lent, secretly and dumbly,
lovers' names anonymous in lists of donors,
its outward form something like the Liturgy
of St. John Chrysostom—gorgeous, measured, sober,
its formal exchanges archaic but understandable:
candles and incense and the Song of the Cherubim,
but always the final mystery, the epiklesis,
the consecration, performed behind golden doors
closed hugely in the faces even of believers.

I have seen the young inchoate Bronx boy poets
scattering their seed in successive teen-aged girls
and their words in verses celebrating waste—
both acts more or less public, open,—
and always the result is the poem tender or violent,
free or ordered, throwing up lovers always
as the final image that somehow justifies their sense
of betrayal in the impotence of poetry.
How old they are: downy lips and clearing complexions,
sneakers, sweat, and Levis, bad teeth and diction—
more vulnerable than their children in an open age
where nothing is private, where even the Holiest of Holies
is fitted out with couch and file, mirrors and Musak.

There are things more important than their bloody affairs:
the old gods shifting in the cycle of the earth;
my great-aunt Flavia McIntyre who made her cancer
a miracle of healing for all the bitter world
who came astonished to see her reaching out for pain

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as if to comfort it; the white calligraphy
of birches in the red combes of the autumn Hudson;
the Pope, I suppose, whose irrelevance afflicts
the world in its curious unbelief like a trauma;
Sugarman Prescott twisted in a parody
of embryo, speechless since birth, but who understands
his mother's private language, whom the Bishop confirmed;
the innocent and irrecoverable purity
of children's speculations on the theory of flight;
the cry "I thirst" hushed in a formal art of mercy
by posh crucifixes, elegant triptychs, and music . . .

Damn the young poets! Let them rather learn
cooking or prosody and study the dull Masters.

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RAYMOND ROSELIEP

ADDRESSED TO PAOLO

Praying a fork over Dante's lyre,
I would bedazzle my dreamer's skill
and journey you out of the wind fire.

I would keep it quiet from Virgil,
busy exploiting a shade or flame,
and hope a young girl might be cordial

to a lover so late as you, come
roaming impatient along her street,
wondering a dance step with wisdom.

Oh I would whirl your soft whirling weight
carefully, Paolo, as my own,
to a kingdom and era of light

older than starry eyed Solomon.

+ HIC JACET

& here lies William Carlos Williams
chickens by his marker pecking plums
it's important that the fowl are white
the fruit cold & the kind that could wait

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A KIND OF LOVE SONG

I love you as the needle
soft mist on my mouth or hand,
as the stuff of a cloud bell,
the cry on the wind's grey swing.

I love you as the dusty
ladder of light in a room,
cobweb, candle wet, matchflame,
pollen of contacted rust.

As the air floating with bees,
smoke of a hair ribbon width,
I love you on the fine earth,
past death or Empedocles.

TENEBRAE

Dodging his neighbor's eye, he chose to be
less awkward, so he donned another suit
of grace and sat a church-length from the front.
He learned to spare his knees at Tenebrae,
believing no blueprint to ecstasy
had been discovered and it might be nice
to sample those delicious darknesses,
on buttocks cushioning a piety.

He felt the blowing-out-of-candle part,
a Latin syntax crowing in the nave,
a waxy smelling blackness, then the wait
before the prayerbooks made unholy sport
rattling the nails and numbered bones of love.

Outside, he cast lots with a milder night.

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THOMAS PARKINSON

THANATOS

I: *As Natural Process*

Up from the canyon in early
Day the sun pauses, love's presence
Clings even as I face dawn's light,
Over the marsh a king-fisher
Dips and calls, dips and calls.

Who will return to deep earth?
As Nicodemus: shall I
Go backward into my mother's womb?
Yes. The great salmon leaps
And hunches for her eggs' release,
That the flesh go rotten
Up steep rapids, in the water's clash
And her brute determinate will
Toward the gravelled pool.

I turn to my ignorant day.
The bitch-salmon slams her body
For the last time on the sea.

II: *As Choice*

Each summer the killer whales cruise Hood Canal,
Large, silent, and hungry, they flash black fins and
white bellies,
Carousing through the fjord. No one dares or cares
to hurt them,
And they leave as large and easy as they entered.

For days after there are no salmon. Then they rise with
the full moon,

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Leaping one after one, they break the phosphorescent
calm water.
In the shallows of the moon the eyes of small cowardly sharks
Gleam. Next day the beach is strewn with mackerel.

Low tide, the tide lands stretch out damp but uncovered,
clams spouting, oysters, geo-ducks, starfish and snails,
Until life becomes longer and denser than the heart can control,
And the entire tortured planet screams in the mind, an
interminable feeding and swelling and expiring.

III: *As Experience*

You went to the country. You stayed
Where the mare foaled, sheep roamed the hills,
Birds migrated each year on time,
The moon greened the entire night.
We walked in that natural light,
Our speech was soft and slow, no bright
Rapid protective irony,
No need to make up for lost time
With time possessed, with time broken.

When I left you I said good-bye
Thinking you were lost to cities
That I had lost you to this old
Simple unruined life as before
We had lost each other to wives,
New friends, children, occupations.
Then your content was my sorrow.

IV: *As Birthdays*

Thirty seven years old
Tired, head full of sand
And when you looked up yesterday
You had been deserted
You counted the women who had already
Gone stringy or gross
And glared—full of rancour—

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At the girls sauntering
Down Columbus Avenue

The balcony curving rustily over Il Popolo
The shop window with dried ducks
The piers

It's all there
And over it the years and years to come
Books poems meals

V: *As Farewell*

Some day I will leave this room
Empty. Better not to clutter it then
And keep the removal
Painless. Small memories are best.
Chenin Blanc, the statement:
"It will give others pleasure,
Give it to them."

Decidedly different, a mangle
Of shared pleasure, sang
Sweet ironies to the leaves.
Departure of trusted hearts,
When shall eternities meet
And sort, neatly, those hurt
Randoms? Laid out on sills
And window rests, brilliant
Linen shrouds my reserves.
And in declaration of sought night
Deprived presences assert,
Assert, a crumbling moon,
    postfigure of delight.
Then to the barriers of sleep
    I commend my body
And revolutions move me to a
    city of endless light
That circling passes to an
    awakened court.
Revolve, revolve, O ministers of grace.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Just Off The Aisle. By Richard A. Duprey. Westminster: Newman Press. 209 pp. $3.75.

In his Introduction, and first three chapters, Mr. Duprey displays refreshing candor as he opens up the subject of Catholic criticism. To begin with, he tries to shrug off the rigorism of most Catholic criticism, refusing to indict the theatre and motion pictures *in toto* as the handmaidens of Beelzebub. All too often Catholic critics are clerics, or clerically minded: they bring staunch faith to the theatre, but little else. They are far more concerned with safety than with art. Orthodoxy and chastity are the order of the day, and any play or motion picture that displays the fleshly aspects of life is anathema. He charges two groups with failure to serve the artistic interests of Catholic society: the clergy, and our universities and colleges.

"Sunday after Sunday, our preachers stand forthright and impregnably self-righteous in their pulpits, alleging bad faith to every person in the realm of the theatre, the motion pictures, television, the publishing world, etc., who dares to disagree in any way with their own particular diagnoses of the licit way to achieve artistic wholesomeness.

"These pulpit polemicists, armed with the authority the clerical collar gives them, thunder forth half-truths in the name of God, make unchristian allegations regarding the entertainment-makers and their 'real' intent and so pervert the public image of Christian truth with the blind energy of their zeal that the world shakes its head sadly and passes us Catholics by, excluding us from the dialogue of those interested in the world of art and anxious to employ it in the 'life enrichment' for which it was intended."

Mr. Duprey then speaks of Catholic universities and colleges, and their contribution to Catholic inadequacy in art. "Our colleges and universities . . . have, for the most part, turned the arts *out* and have been noticeably deficient in encouraging them to positive growth . . . often pleading poverty for an excuse, which really hides a dogged feeling that the arts are not quite safe. They tend to ignore the whole area, to pretend it is not there and needs no curricular attention. . . .

"In today's 'rat-race' of scientific competition, our Catholic colleges which should husband their unique qualifications to safeguard Christian humanism, have squandered much of their limited resources on becoming shoddy facsimilies of M.I.T. . . ."

Of course, Mr. Duprey is entirely correct in what he says. Most members of the clergy won't like this sort of thing being bruited about, since they control our education system. But they can't dislodge the truth. Anyone who is a product of Catholic education or has attempted to teach within its confines knows all too well how thoroughly the creative arts are belittled, set in a corner, or, heavily shackled, are mounted on the campus stage as evidence of a minor fervor.

However, it would be unfair to charge the clerics with ulterior motives. Their major weakness is ignorance. Although they are well trained in spiritual and sacerdotal matters, they have been denied almost any exposure to the creative arts. This has historical and economic bases, and it can be observed, particularly in the last five or ten years, that more and more clerics are becoming aware of the esthetics of art, and not just their moral dangers.

This, then, brings up the ultimate question of how one should view a work of art. Should a critic have the eyes of a moralist alone or should he possess the double vision of the moralist-esthete? Mr. Duprey answers the questions by posing three questions: 1) What is the author trying to do? 2) How well does he succeed in achieving that end? 3) Should it have been done in the first place?

Quite clearly, the first two questions deal with esthetics; only the third faces moral issues. In other words, Mr. Duprey is saying, let us *look* at the work *qua* work, without interposing moral questions. Only after assaying the material given do we place it in a moral context. Most Catholic critics, unfortunately, leap over the first two questions in order to embrace the third. In so doing, they miss the whole point of criticism. Not only that, but they fail to discover what art is.

Because Catholic education does little to further the arts, there are not too many Catholics engaged in them, particularly the theatre. There is no Catholic prominent anywhere, with the dubious exception of Graham Greene, who is a far better novelist than playwright. The theatre is a great artistic force and Catholics must come to reckon with it, both as participants and as critics. Otherwise, we merely leave the field to

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others whose creative urges are badly misshapen and whose works may well pull down the theatre. Mr. Duprey speaks out on this point forcibly when he says:

"I think we have as citizens of a nation—partakers of and sharers in a culture—an obligation to contribute to the betterment of that culture. We have an obligation to help ourselves and our fellow citizens to gain a fuller measure of humanity—a measure of true life enrichment—from the arts. This is an area in which we Catholics seem uniquely well qualified to lend a hand, *if*—and it's a great big "if"—we place ourselves a little more carefully in tune with our *real* cultural heritage, our *true* traditions, and not that peculiarly narrow brand of rigorism that has all too long, here in America, clung to our public image."

Once Mr. Duprey has stated the case for clear-sighted criticism (by the Catholic), he proceeds to a series of chapters dealing with such disparate subjects as Ingmar Bergman, epic theatre, sex in the theatre, modern tragedy, and the loss of comedy.

The pleasure in reviewing a book like this one lies in the fact that, once past the ground rules, artistic debate can be indulged in. We are not blinded by narrowed perspectives, but can view authors and their work with the "double vision" previously alluded to.

Mr. Duprey does an excellent job in contrasting the earthy, swaggering, blasphemous Brendan Behan with the mean and self-pitying Shelagh Delaney, author of *A Taste of Honey*. Here we have two writers who appall the rigorous Catholic critic, but whom Mr. Duprey places in proper perspective. Behan, he says, after likening him to Bloy, Bernanos, and even Shaw, "doesn't want to grab your intellect, he wants to change the world." In contrast, *A Taste of Honey* "is a view of life so personal and so jaundiced that we cannot really find human compassion, the much needed ingredient if a play is really to strike fire in the audience member's heart." Behan's wild invective seeks action and compassion; Delaney wallows in morbid self pity.

Mr. Duprey's study on this point should serve as a useful guide or text in all criticism that concerns itself with the more sordid aspects of life. And for those whose eyes have beheld only cherubim and seraphim, there is much that is sordid.

On the other hand, Mr. Duprey's chapter on Tennessee Williams appears as little more than an apology, in which he violates his own rules, principally the "third question." One has the uneasy feeling that the author likes Williams and wants to paint as lovely a picture as possible. This is most apparent when he insists that Williams moralizes in his work. This is most debatable; or if he actually *does* moralize, he comes to conclusions that should make the Christian shudder.

Mr. Duprey takes Edward Albee to task, praises Ingmar Bergman, and achieves what must be considered the heights of critical acumen when he says of MacLeish's *J.B.*: "For the most part it generates all the warmth and excitement of a non-denominational funeral."

—Cheryl McBrown

William Faulkner: Early Prose and Poetry. Edited by Carvel Collins. Boston: Little, Brown. 134 pp. $3.75.

William Faulkner used to say that he began as a poet, but failed, and turned reluctantly to prose fiction. It should be instructive, then, to look at his beginnings. This collection, expanded by Carvel Collins from an earlier edition for Japanese students, permits us to do that: it is an intriguing, and even amusing, rag-bag assemblage of the writings and drawings Faulkner did in his undergraduate years at the University of Mississippi.

The poems are the customary immature and bad romantic imitations of an adolescent drunk on Swinburne and Shelley. William Faulkner failed as a poet because he failed to discover a personal and contemporary language. A contemporary of Tate and Cummings and Crane, Faulkner was somehow unable to assimilate, as they did, the lessons of Eliot. He drowned as a poet, about his twenty-fifth year, in the swamps of Romantic verbiage. Having only a fair ear, and ill at ease in the formal English meters which he admired but never mastered, he turned inevitably, after the fevers of first composition had cooled, to the less demanding disciplines of prose. The one story in this collection, awkward as it is, holds one's attention in a way that the poems never could.

Far more sophisticated are his book reviews and his drawings. The reviews distinctly reveal the dandified young melancholiac of the photographs, the *soi-disant* "Count" William Falkner (as his patronymic was then spelled) with the cane, the moustache, the swagger, and the bad French. In an essay on "Criticism," published in *The Double Dealer* in 1925, Faulkner complains of critics who do not give readers (and author) the essential of criticism, but fix the book and author, pinned and wriggling, in some smartly irrelevant phrase. Yet his own book reviews in his Ole Miss days glitter with sharp phrases: on Carl Sandburg ("sentimental Chicago propaganda"); on Mark Twain ("a hack writer who would not have been considered fourth rate in Europe, who tricked out a few of the old proven 'sure fire' literary skeletons with sufficient local color to intrigue the superficial and the lazy"; on Bernard Shaw ("Language means nothing to Shaw: except for the accident of birth he might well have written in French."); on Joseph Hergesheimer ("a deliberate pandering to the emotions . . . like an attentuation of violins. He should never try to write about people at all; he should spend his time, if he must write, describing

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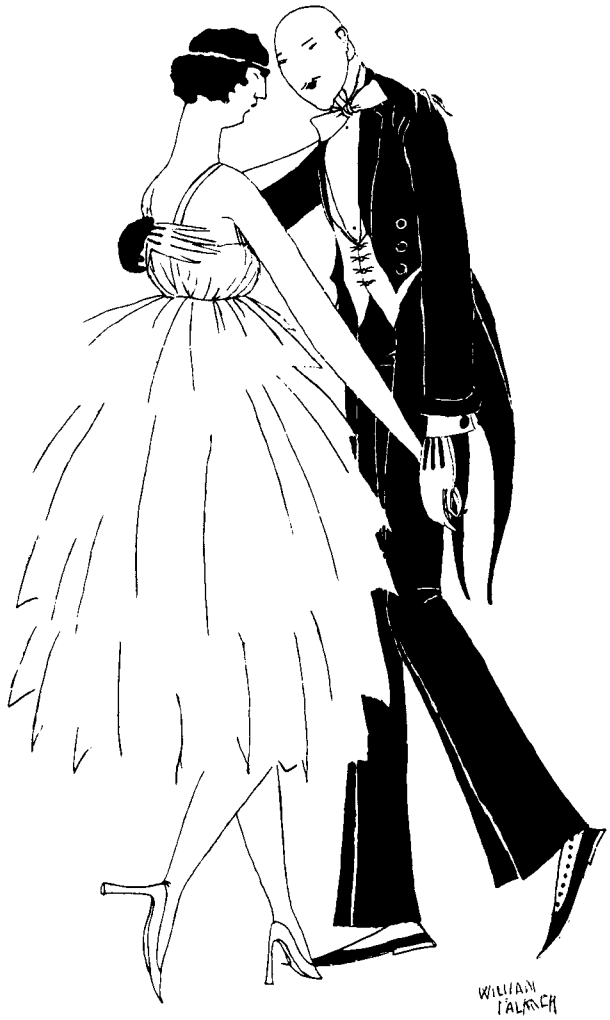

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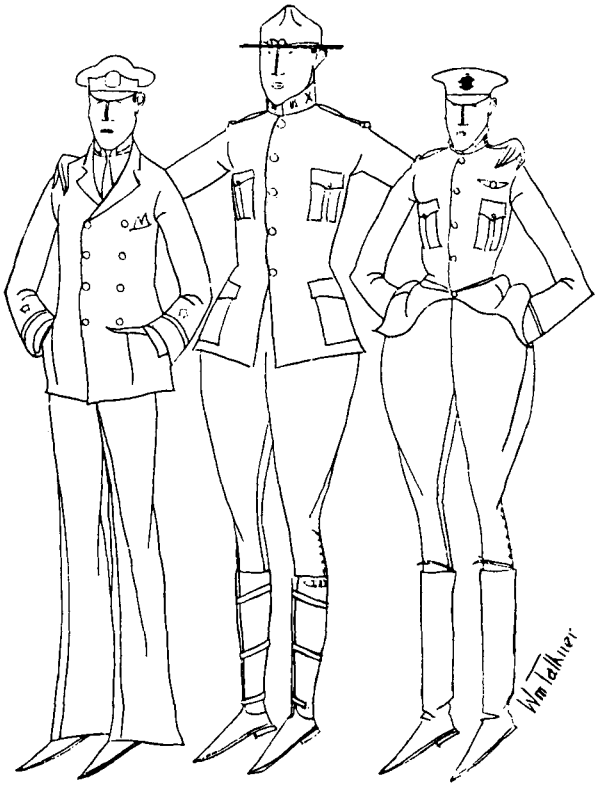
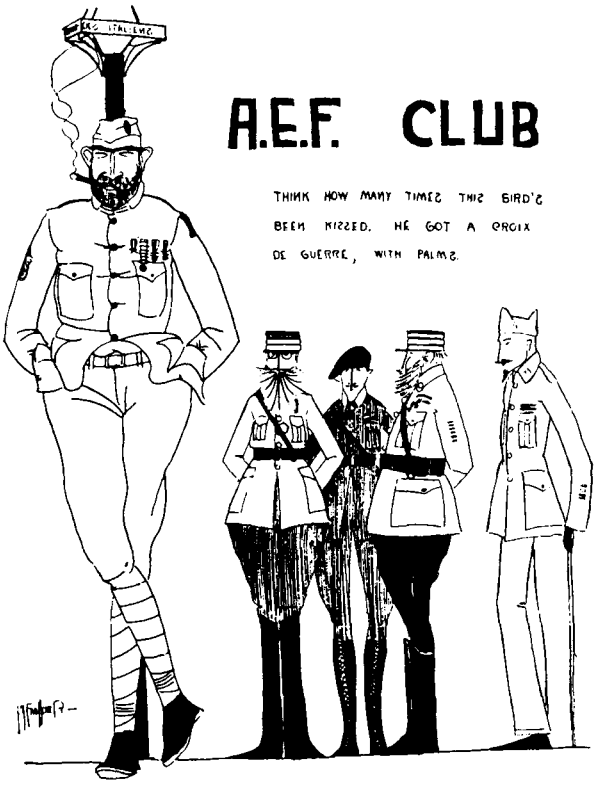


FISH, FLESH, FOWL



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trees or marble fountains . . ."); on Walt Whitman ("bombast and muscle-bound platitudes"); on modern poets ("howling like curs on a cold trail in a dark wood"); and, finally, a virtuoso piece of surgery on Amy Lowell ("Miss Amy Lowell tried a polyphonic prose which, in spite of the fact that she has created some delightful statuettes of perfectly blown glass, is merely a literary flatulency; and it has left her, reed in hand, staring in naive surprise at the air whence her bubbles have burst.") The *Smart Set* overtones of these reviews, the cynical asides of the essays ("It is a time-honoured custom to read Omar to one's mistress as an accompaniment to consummation—a sort of stringed obligato among the sighs."), scarcely prepare us for Faulkner's amazing efflorescence as a novelist of Shakespearian power. That he did not founder in these fripperies, did not drift into a waspish middle-age with a sterile aestheticism—for the ghosts of Saltus and Huneker seem to be glimmering near these pages—is as astonishing as any of the astonishing adventures of the Yoknapatawpha saga.

The pallid *fin-de-siècle* phase of Faulkner ended after the first two novels—*Soldier's Pay* and *Mosquitoes*—when he turned to a consideration of the Sartoris family. The influence of Aldous Huxley is dominant in *Mosquitoes*, which is certainly Faulkner's worst novel; and the wearying and false brilliance of the epigrams of *Mosquitoes* is foreshadowed by some of the reviews of this collection. When Faulkner wrote as a "cerebral" writer, he was derivative and weak. When he abandoned himself to his emotions, when he returned to simple "country things" and plunged into the depths of the tragic situation, he wrote with power and spoke with ease. The modernity of *As I Lay Dying* with its colloquial monologues is far more impressive than the thin derivative decor of *Mosquitoes*. And in the two essays on O'Neill and the American Drama, Faulkner senses that the power of the American writer lies in his use of "language as it is spoken in America." "In comparison with it," he says, "British is a Sunday night affair of bread and milk—melodious but slightly tiresome nightingales in a formal clipped hedge." He senses this great power of language in O'Neill and in Conrad. Conrad—the exotic and lyric Conrad, the teller-of tales—was Faulkner's true master, even if he nominated, in various interviews during the 1950's, both Joyce and Mann instead. Faulkner was never to acquire Conrad's mastery of language, nor his sense of structure and irony: the play of the intellect on the great enduring themes. Instead, like O'Neill, he cast himself down into the pit of darkness and groped and groped. Yet he certainly surpassed O'Neill. The French writers who, during the 1940's, lifted their glasses to toast, "Shakespeare, Balzac, et Faulkner!", may be pardoned their enthusiasm. Try toasting that improbable trio, "Sophocles, Racine, and . . . O'Neill!"

The Fates who were forced to tell William Faulkner at last, "Young man, you are not a poet," relenting, permitted him to become instead the most powerful novelist of his period. If Faulkner had not failed as a poet, we would never have heard of him.

—Hieronymo Kreuz

Morte D'Urban. By J. F. Powers. New York: Doubleday. 336 pp. $4.50.

Purists of the neat categories, when they come to consider J. F. Powers' "first novel," *Morte D'Urban*, will no doubt put forth such variously manifest definitions of the novel as may "prove" that this is not one. The reader's and the reviewer's time, however, will be mutually enhanced if not expended on such enervating technicalities. It is sufficient to say that the third published book of J. F. Powers, whether novel or short stories on a main theme, has more than enough connective tissue to present a meaningful entity of work. In fact, *Morte D'Urban* is a thoroughly accomplished work of fiction.

To begin with, *Morte D'Urban* ought to do much to dispel the cult of American Gothic which has been the "inside" critical approach to Powers' work. For instance, it is considered significant to pair him off with, say, Flannery O'Connor in panel discussions which are distinguished chiefly for missing the point about Powers. (In reviews, too, the commentators frequently pair him off with Graham Greene—another faux pas). If it is necessary to relate him to another contemporary writer, that writer is simply and purely Evelyn Waugh. As it happens, moreover, the comparison is a fruitful and suggestive one. It not only has the corrective effect of saying, "How much like Waugh, how least like Greene," but of bringing forth those qualities in the writings of Powers which make him both uniquely American and universal in his own right.

It is perfectly clear that J. F. Powers has Waugh's gift for comic invention—names, characterization, and improbable situations. When bungled by overanxious wits or given the Broadway/TV treatment, the delicate and professional combinations of these qualities degenerate into gobs of mere burlesque. That is to say, comic writing of the kind accomplished by Waugh and J. F. Powers is an extremely difficult medium which requires as much native genius as purely acquired skills.

Take them as they come: Father Urban himself, the archetype urban priest today in the American Catholic milieu; the Order of Clementines, founded by the mythical martyr St. Clementine, crushed beneath a great millstone by the Huguenots—hence, inevitably, there is an associate endeavor of the Order called Millstone Press; the rival Order, the Dalma-

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tians; the Minnesota diocese, Deusterhaus, or "sorrowful house"; Billy Cosgrove, the big deal layman, using the technique of the Big Deal to coerce his own salvation; Mrs. Thwaites, chief benefactor of St. Clement's Hill, who lives in a tropically heated room lit only by the glow of two television sets; her son Dickie, forty-six, a religious and literary dilettante; to say nothing, finally, of the various clerical types which both endear and embarrass the reader as observer once removed.

The golf scene is pure American Waugh and possibly the high point of the novel. It had been the brilliant stroke of Father Urban, with Father Superior's permission and Billy Cosgrove's resources, to transform the Clementian landscape into a golf course as an enticement to attract retreatants. It not only attracts retreatants, it attracts the Bishop of the diocese, a duffer, who is readily cut down by Father Urban's all but professional skill as a golfer. Next time, however, the Bishop returns with a "boy" of his own to give Father Urban a much-needed lesson in humility. The duel is followed with increasing excitement by a hovering gallery of novices from the Hill. The ignominious end comes in a manner hardly to be revealed by the crass indelicacies of a book review. The fact is that Father Urban is beaned by the ball on the very last hole.

One commentator has taken this incident to be "le morte d'Urban" of the title. Curiously, however, it is this very question of the title which has been quite generally ignored. Like a poetic figure, perhaps, it cannot be interpreted in any singly conclusive sense, but remains rich with the import and overtones of irony. For example, although Father Urban is an organizational man in collar and cassock, his religious attitudes seem as innocent in purpose as any knight's in quest of the Holy Grail. A degree of emergence from this state, especially in a life supposedly directed to spiritual perfection, would no doubt result in a death of sorts. This death of Urban has been largely overrated by even some of the most astutely professional readers of *Morte D'Urban*. They wish a transformation that does not actually take place. This, in fact, may be the crucial problem of the novel.

Who can question the perfect tone and flavor of J. F. Powers' recreation of the Catholic priest in American time and place? It is quite inaccurate, therefore, to say that this ministerial milieu would be interchangeable with almost any other Christian sect, as one reviewer suggests, and still have the novel retain its unique identity. On the contrary, what makes *Morte D'Urban* truly unique, what makes all this satire poignantly relevant and not merely comic, is that in the imbalance of the Church institutional with the Church charismatic we see, or at least sense, our own estrangement in the present human situation. This is what *Morte D'Urban* is about; and it is not so much a critical insight, perhaps, as a recognizable syndrome in the majority of urban parishes in the United States.

Consequently, for all its overt absence, the Church charismatic is the moral force at work in *Morte D'Urban*. If this were not so, the satiric qualities of the novel would lose the point and sting of conviction. It is obvious, for example, that the Order of St. Clement is itself a symptom not of the proliferation of the Church but of its departmental fragmentation. It is not a legitimate Order at all but a small enterprise on the verge of bankruptcy, whose idea of Success is to become a Going Concern. When Father Urban addresses the Great Plains Commercial Club at its annual Poinsettia Smorgasbord, he is an ecclesiastical Babbitt doing his ecumenical bit. The shattering import of this novel is that behind its coy ironies and inside familiarities lies the spiritual depletion of the religious and the dull corrosiveness of the laity.

Finally, then, it would be a gross misreading of *Morte D'Urban* to wish the assertion of a subjective (or reforming) force to counteract a moral force presumed to be absent. The refusal to do this is, in fact, what makes the novel a thoroughly Catholic one. The heroes of the Church are its saints. But they are raised out of charismatic elements rather than produced by organizational pressures. They wish too much who see the last sentence of the book—"Oddly enough, although for many years he'd traveled out of Chicago, he seemed to think of the Hill as home."—as either a doubly ironic about-face or the beginnings of spiritual perfection. Forever emblazoned on the Order's coat-of-arms is the legend of its defeat: "Be a Winner."

—Thomas P. McDonnell

American Drama: Contemporary Allegory from Eugene O'Neill to Tennessee Williams. By Louis Broussard. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 145 pp. $3.75.

Mr. Broussard has dared much and accomplished little in his explorations into the American theatre of allegory. To use the author's own words: "This book proposes to establish the attitude of American drama toward contemporary man and his problems as it traces the evolution of the allegorical play in America, to suggest the influences which went into its creation, and to relate the example in question to other works by the same author and to other forms of contemporary expression with the same theme."

This, then, is Mr. Broussard's dare; large, exhaustive, definitive, as if he were mapping out a vast unknown area, leaving no small stream or valley unmarked, no range unrecorded, no pebble unaccounted for.

What follows is 130 pages of disappointment and eventual annoyance. The American theatre, though not possessing remarkable quality,

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has amassed a considerable body of work and 130 pages simply won't contain it. Rather than be exhaustive, the author has decided to be selective. One of his more significant selections concerns the playwrights he will discuss. They are: Eugene O'Neill, Elmer Rice, John Howard Lawson, Philip Barry, T. S. Eliot, Thornton Wilder, Robert Sherwood, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and Archibald MacLeish.

This selection will cause either confusion or contempt; confusion over the exclusion of people like Maxwell Anderson, William Saroyan, Clifford Odets, all of whom wrote at least some significant allegorical drama; contempt over the inclusion of such bad playwrights as Lawson and Barry, neither of whom ever produced a worthwhile dramatic work.

Also, there is the propriety of including Eliot among American playwrights. His plays are thoroughly British, as is Eliot. But then, to include Eliot is to add enormously to the stature of American allegory, even if it *is* cheating somewhat.

Far more serious than the matter of playwrights is the selection of plays and their analysis.

Probably the most amazing decision of Mr. Broussard is to dismiss *Long Day's Journey into Night* with a passing phrase while devoting an inordinate amount of time on a number of relatively insignificant plays of Eugene O'Neill. *The Hairy Ape* holds a curious fascination for the author, as does *Dynamo* and *Days Without End*. These plays, although allegorical, are not substantial. If Mr. Broussard wants to explore the struggle of contemporary man with the forces of his age, as he claims, *Long Day's Journey* would yield far more material since it deals with the relationships between closely locked-in people, who, in the final analysis, compose the most important source of force playing on man.

The same might be said of the author's strange concentration on Tennessee Williams' *Camino Real*. Here, however, the author hesitates to take a firm stand in interpreting the playwright's philosophy. As well he might, the Williams play being the most thoroughly pretentious and garbled effort to stagger onto Broadway.

Actually, criticism could be levelled at almost all of Mr. Broussard's selections. He plays a dangerous game in selecting the playwrights he does, and in the plays he analyzes. This can be explained by the observation that virtually all plays are allegorical. It is the universality, not the singularity, of a character that makes the play. Any attempt to say this or that play is allegorical and another is not, is to invite argument. It is much like an analyst's accepting certain dreams as revelation of the unconscious, and other dreams as mere nocturnal diversions. To avoid this sort of attack, anyone attempting to study dramatic allegory would have to be far more inclusive in his catalogue. This is a serious defect in the present work because the author draws, from a painfully few examples, sweeping conclusions as to the philosophy of his playwrights. He has O'Neill swinging like a pendulum, from hope to despair and then to hope, resting, finally, in despair. If O'Neill could have just managed one more play, one could be certain the final resting place would have turned out to be hope.

Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine* is given a thorough going over; it is pure allegory. But what of *Street Scene*? Surely it, too, is allegorical, even if couched in more deliberately human terms.

The inclusion of Philip Barry and John Howard Lawson is carrying the study of allegory too far. It reveals bad taste.

When he begins his study of T. S. Eliot, Mr. Broussard limps through the few plays that comprise the Eliot portfolio with the unsure gait of a man confronted by a mysterious stranger—Christianity. He is not at all sure about what Christianity is, particularly as it give Eliot's work its profound quality. His confusion is communicated to the reader who moves on to the chapter on Thornton Wilder to clear his head. Wilder, so simple a sentimentalist, is represented by *Our Town*, a play that could possibly be considered allegorical, but whose larger claim is that of being a cozy bit of New England schmaltz; and *The Skin of Our Teeth*, which is a tedious and protracted vaudeville skit.

And so on. He discusses Sherwod's *Petrified Forest*, and draws a gloomy conclusion as to Sherwood's philosophy. It is like picking up the jawbone of an ass and constructing a civilization around it. Why *Petrified Forest* and not, say, *Idiot's Delight* as the summary statement of philosophy?

American Drama, subtitled "Contemporary Allegory from Eugene O'Neill to Tennessee Williams," is too brief an encounter with the subject to come out with anything of value. Possibly a half a thousand pages would do it; but then there is the problem of the author's insight into the dreams of his patients.

—Michael Edwards

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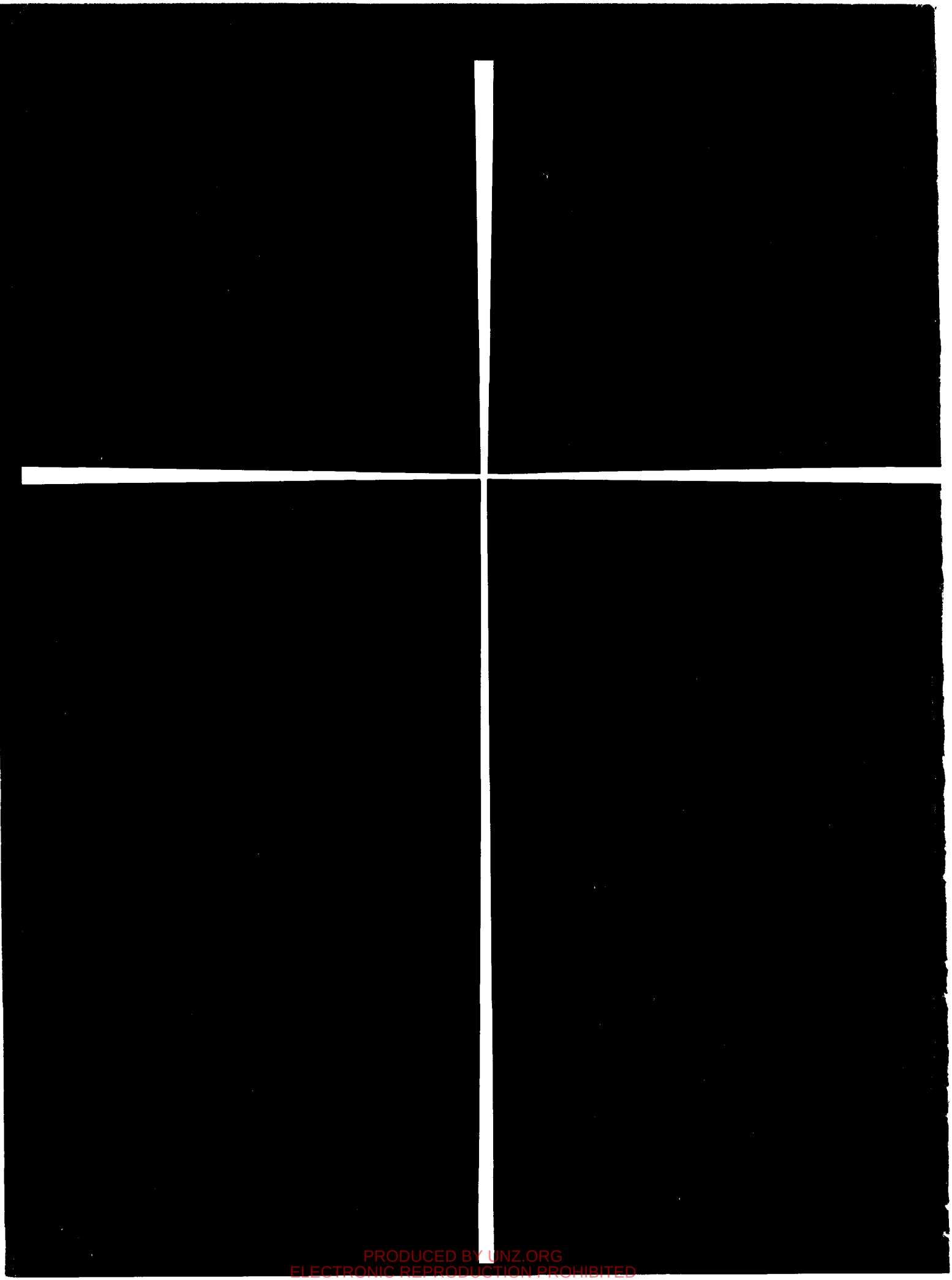

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